



**for such a time as this**

SPIRIT FED, SPIRIT LED

a leadership event

## **work·book | \werk-buk\**

**a student's book containing instructions and exercises relating to a particular subject.**

### **About this workbook**

As women created in the image of God and called to discipleship, we are disciples of Christ. Disciples are students, focused on lifelong studying and following the instructions of Jesus. Of course, the ultimate workbook is God's Word. This workbook will contain instructions and exercises to encourage understanding and practicing servant leadership. It will also lead participants to develop a strategic plan for leading a leaderful community of women for such a time as this.

Women who are leaders in synodical women's organizations (SWO), units, clusters, and conferences are attending this leadership event, along with individual servant leaders. This workbook will bridge the work started by these women at the event and other women in the SWOs.

Finally, this workbook will only work through what is entered in it. Each leader must push through the unknowns and stay focused on the desired outcomes.

## **table of contents**

The Theme | For Such a Time as This: Spirit Fed, Spirit Led, 3

Esther's Story | Bible study, 5

Common Understanding | Servant leader, servant leadership, 8

The Plan | Collaborative SWO strategy to reboot and rebuild for such a time as this, 10

Breakout-work sessions guide | Work pages, 12

Resource Guide | WELCA and recommended resources, 19

Additional | things to know..., 21

The Journey | things are just beginning, 22

## The Theme | For Such a Time as This: Spirit Fed, Spirit Led

“For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” Esther 4:14 NRSV

Our theme, of course, is drawn from the Old Testament book of Esther, whose particular story speaks to God’s love and care for God’s people when the people were unable to free themselves from their present situation. We, like Esther, don’t have to close our eyes and wait for the worst to blow over in the midst of this pandemic. We can follow Esther’s lead by listening for God, following the Holy Spirit, and discerning a plan and strategy to reboot and rebuild each synodical organization with a unique ministry plan.

This phrase “for such a time as this” (4:14) is much more than words spoken to Esther by Mordecai, her older cousin. It speaks today to God’s timing and a move of the Holy Spirit when humanity is faced with ills that are crushing the people.

“For such a time as this” also describes the kind of leader God needs to bring people to an agreement quickly. When Mordecai lays before Esther the crisis, the imminent threat of death for her people. He was sure of one thing— her access and influence.

The theme lifts forward the importance of hearing between the lines as Esther did with Mordecai’s written question that he was seemingly pondering out loud— “Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” Engaging the entire story shows how Esther received, embraced, and responded to the challenge.

Esther was Spirit Fed. It is very clear that Esther was spiritually nourished, and she understood that prayer and fasting were essential to preparing for a “such a time as this” assignment. She was Spirit Led. The story is skimpy on details and there isn’t much she could be certain about as she prepared to go before the king alone. And, although the story does not mention the Holy Spirit by name, she trusts and follows the Spirit.

God continues to use this way of calling servant leaders, often with women, to join God on what appears to be an impossible journey to do what is possible.

Enjoy the journey!



## | Action

Read the entire book of Esther. It is 10 chapters full of excitement, suspense, and some comic relief. As a servant leader, ponder “Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” What does this mean for you? Now, think about the challenges and crises today. Which of these is affecting your SWO? Conferences/clusters? Units?

# Esther's Story | Bible study

## Esther 1-10

You will hear an engaging Bible study presented by the **Rev. Heidi Neumark**. The story of Esther, her plight, and that of her people will help us to re-member why we do ministry with and among God's women and our actions as servant leaders.

Since the time of Eve and Mrs. Noah, God has been calling women to do the hardest and what seems to be the most impossible. During our limited time together, Pastor Heidi will dive right into what God and Esther were up to. So, to get to know Esther before the Bible study presentation by taking a look at these interesting facts about Esther and her story...

### Interesting facts...

**The Book of Esther** is one of two books in the Bible bearing a woman's name. The other book is Ruth, both books are in the Old Testament. The story of Esther is set in Ancient Persia in the capital city of Susa. Today it is Shush (capital city), Shush County, Khuzestan Province, Iran. At the 2006 census, the population was 53,897.

**Esther's birth name is Hadassah.** It is a Hebrew name that means "Myrtle Tree." The myrtle tree is referred to in Isaiah (Isaiah 41:19 and 55:13) as the divine recovery and establishment of God's promises. Over time her name has been defined as "daughter of God."

**Speaking of names,** God is not mentioned by name anywhere in the book of Esther although God is very much at work. Esther is the only book in the Bible where God is not mentioned by name. It is also, interesting that the number seven – considered by Christians as God's perfect number and often represents completion and wholeness – appears many times in the book.

### Esther...

Esther was more than just a pretty face that could grab the attention of men and the most important man of all, the king. Esther's parents died when she was young. Then she was kidnapped and forced into a harem. We encounter her when she was chosen to replace the living queen who was dethroned for standing her ground. Esther is much more than her situations and circumstances.

She exhibited character traits of patience and obedience. She was relational, responsible, cooperative, always thinking of others, community-minded, focused, and humble. And, although there were no spiritual gifts assessment tools around during her time, Esther certainly could have been gifted with the spiritual gifts of discernment, faith, leadership, service, and wisdom.

### **Bible Study extras**

**Mordecai** was an older cousin; in some versions, he is referred to as her uncle. In any case, he took her in and raised her as his daughter. The odd placement of the family history (2:5-6) gives a hint to the first Mordecai and the generations leading up to Cousin Mordecai and Esther as family together.

**Queen Vashti**, Old Persian meaning is “excellent woman, best of women” and she lives up to her name. She was a bold woman for that or any time. She understood the consequences of her action but she was willing to live with her decision.

**King Ahasuerus**, there are three men mentioned in the Bible with this name; Daniel 9:1, Ezra 4:6, and the Book of Esther. Because this king invaded Greece, he is sometimes referred to by the Greek name Xerxes or Artaxerxes.

**Haman**, some would call him the villain. Here Haman represents us when we stand in the way, withhold our gifts and resources, or do nothing because we are not the lead, we were not asked, or we just don't agree with the plan.



## | Action

Use the fillable area below to note any reflections after completing the assessment.

Complete the online spiritual gifts assessment at <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Faith-Practices/Spiritual-Renewal/Assessment-Tools> or download and print the *Gifts for You: opening your spiritual gifts* resource. The assessments are the same, accommodating your preference for completing them.

## Common understanding | Servant leader, servant leadership

*...a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit*

Discipleship is our lifelong practice of using the words and actions of Jesus to complete the mission and ministry we have been given. Our discipleship includes how we manage what we are charged to care for (stewardship) and how we engage the faith practices Jesus modeled and used in community (servant leadership) to complete ministry assignments.

The servant leader can say yes to positions by election or appointment. These positions are generally time-sensitive. Effective servant leaders are agile in shifting quickly at the end of a time-sensitive position to following in the community's work of serving others.

There are key descriptors of effective **servant leadership**. They are—

1. **fluid** in flowing between leading and following.
2. **fellowship-oriented**, always engaged in building relationships and the beloved community by breaking bread, studying, praying, and spending quality time in mutual encouragement.
3. **flexible in following** the Holy Spirit. Like many women in both the Old and New Testament, Esther didn't hear God's voice from a burning bush or an angel, it was the Holy Spirit's leading as she read the messages from Mordecai.
4. **fully open** to God's plan and working with others to complete the mission. Remember, there are many moving parts to God's plan with servant leaders and followers working together.

Practicing fluidity, fellowship (nurturing relationships), flexibility, and being fully open and flowing between leading and following is very important to building your servant leader muscle. **Esther was a servant leader.**





## | Action

Use the fillable area below to answer these questions.

How is your servant leadership? Be as honest as you can be. Only you will hear your responses. This will help you in discovering how you are operating and allow you to adjust your faith practices towards becoming a more effective servant leader. Remember, reflect. Don't analyze or judge.

Is it difficult to shift from leading to following?

Are the faith practices (praying, studying, worshiping, inviting, encouraging, serving, and giving) part of your daily life? Where and how do they show up?

## The Plan | Collaborative SWO strategy to reboot and rebuild for such a time as this

*“For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity **for just such a time as this.**”*

Esther 4:14 NRSV

Like Esther, God is calling Women of the ELCA, a leader-full community of women, to a new thing. The Spirit is moving, coming our way. Who knows? Perhaps Women of the ELCA has come to this place, with these leaders, for such a time as this. **Camille Trott** will lead us through a process for discerning a plan and strategy to reboot and rebuild each synodical organization with a unique ministry plan.

You may wonder why we are focusing on the synodical women’s organization expression of Women of the ELCA. Glad you asked. Remember that Women of the ELCA is one organization with three expressions: congregational units, synodical women’s organizations, and the churchwide women’s organization. For such a time as this—the churchwide expression, like **Mordecai**, is asking the question. Like Esther, the synodical women’s organization expression is the connector between the question (response and action) and the people. The unit expression is the heart of the organization, the boots on the ground where we act in our congregations, conferences/clusters, and community. The unit and its participants represent Esther’s people in the story.

It will be tempting to dust off ‘a tried and true’ program and present it as a plan, a strategy for rebooting, rebuilding our organization. Resist. Reset. Get ready for the Spirit-led plan to *mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ* for such a time as this.



## | Action

Use the fillable area below to answer these questions.

Bring to the session the challenges that surfaced in your regional gathering Thursday evening.

Which challenges are a threat to the people? What is keeping women from freely participating, giving, serving, and fully embracing our purpose and mission?

What is producing the fatigue? What is needed to reboot? Continue discerning what you are called to contribute to the plan.

And remember, think 'servant leader.' These questions are for you personally. What you need is most often what others need.

## Breakout-work sessions guide | Work pages

After each plenary presentation, you will gather in a breakout-work session (15 or 20 minutes). You'll be in small groups with other servant leaders from across the church. There you will quickly reflect, clarify, and discern what you need to incorporate from the presentation into your plan that you will later share with your SWO partners. Remember, the SWO plan is not complete without you, but it is not you alone.



### | Action

Use the fillable area below to answer these questions.

Stay focused. This is a quick session by design. You are operating like Esther: you have a short window of time to discern the plan and strategy for the people. Remember, your plan will be what you contribute to it.

At the beginning of each of these sessions, type into the chat your name and how others can contact you (cell number, email, Facebook Messenger, etc.).

For discussion:

What do you need to listen for?

Where do you need clarity?

Check the chat for others you would like to connect with.



**| Action**



**| Action**



## | Action



## | Action





**| Action**



**| Action**

## Resource Guide | WELCA and recommended resources

This list includes the many resources highlighted or used during this event. They will be helpful for your personal use and as you work with others in creating a unique strategic plan for your SWO. Keep this list close and add in other resources that will help your SWO leaders implement and support the plan.

Model Constitutions <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/tools-for-leaders/constitutions>

Synodical Leaders Guide <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/SynodicalLeadersGuideAugust2019.Update.pdf>

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Junio2019.Spanedit.pdf>

Models for Mission <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ModelsforMission.pdf>

[https://www.womenoftheelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ModelsforMission\\_Spanish2.pdf](https://www.womenoftheelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ModelsforMission_Spanish2.pdf)

Welcome flyer <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Toolkit-Revise.pdf>

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ToolKit.Span2021.pdf>

Spiritual Gifts Assessment <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Faith-Practices/Spiritual-Renewal/Assessment-Tools>.

It can also be found in the resource *Gifts for You: opening your spiritual gifts* which can be downloaded for free at <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/filebin/pdf/resources/SpiritualGifts.pdf>.

### **Becoming an anti-racist organization**

ARTICLE III of our churchwide constitution includes 13 principles to guide the organization. Principle 13, Anti-Racist Identity, states, This community of women shall claim and practice an anti-racist identity and actively seek full participation and shared power in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies, and practices.

Doing this work is crucial for such a time as this. The churchwide executive board recently identified three anti-racism foci that all expressions of the organization are to be about: awareness-raising, accompaniment, and advocacy. Go to <https://www.womenoftheelca.org/ministry-action/justice> to learn more. There you'll find a curated list of books, podcasts, and other resources. You can also learn about our Racial Justice Advocacy Network and how you can get involved.

## **\$1 Million Campaign for Katie's Fund**

Later this year, Women of the ELCA will launch a campaign to raise \$1 million for Katie's Fund, an endowment that supports leadership development, global connections, and living theology. It's one of the ways the churchwide organization is responding to such a time as this. The infrastructure for the campaign is being assembled now. Visit [welca.org](http://welca.org) as details are announced.

## Additional | things to know...

### Leadership Event Offering

Every time we gather, we worship, and we give generously, showing thanks for what God has first given us. For this event, the offering is designated as a Thankoffering.

What is a Thankoffering? The idea of collecting donations in small offering boxes goes back to the very early 1800s when women formed “mite” or “cent” societies to raise money for the support of church projects and foreign missionaries. Today Thankofferings are gathered by individuals and units as well as conferences/clusters, SWOs, and at churchwide gatherings for the ministries and mission of our women’s organization.

How do I make a gift? Individual gifts may be made online using a credit or debit card by going to [welca.org/give](http://welca.org/give) and selecting “Thankofferings” as the designation. Alternately, a personal check made payable to Women of the ELCA, with “Thankofferings” noted on the memo line, can be mailed to: **Women of the ELCA, c/o ELCA Gift Processing, PO Box 1809, Merrifield VA 22116-8009.**

Gifts from congregational units ([form B](#)) and synodical women’s organizations ([form C](#)) should be drawn on the group’s checking account so proper credit can be given to the group. Make checks payable to Women of the ELCA, with “Thankofferings” noted on the memo line and on the appropriate form. Mail the group’s check to: **Women of the ELCA, c/o ELCA Gift Processing, PO Box 1809, Merrifield VA 22116-8009.**

### Leadership Training Sessions

Online leadership training sessions are planned in April and May for the following groups: SWO presidents and vice presidents, SWO treasurers, SWO secretaries, SWO board members, and conference/cluster leaders. More details will be made available next month. Plan to attend the training session that best fits your current role. You are also encouraged to attend others, especially if you are considering allowing your name to be nominated for a role different than the one you currently have.

## **The Journey | things are just beginning...**

Use this space to make additional notes and plans for you. You are an essential link in discerning a plan for rebooting and rebuilding your synodical women's organization and its conference/clusters and units. Therefore, you must bring your best self to the process. Although the action God called Esther to was executed in three days, the plan took 10 years to complete. Start working on your plan today.



## | Action

Use the fillable area below to answer these questions.

Who did you encounter during this leadership event that you need to follow up with?

What further reading do you need to accomplish?

Contact your SWO president to let her know you were at this event and ready to be part of the work to build a plan and strategy for rebooting and rebuilding the SWO, its leadership, its conferences/clusters, and units.

What task will you help with?

Who will you invite to the upcoming leadership training sessions offered through the churchwide women's organization?

What do you need?