

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 11 board members and 4 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 an event 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, she carries out the policies of the organization and works 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 member* (or voting members) brings 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 to accomplish 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 people who may vote on legislative matters at an *assembly* or *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 unit of the *ELCA*.