

## Session 1 – Presenter Notes

Linda Post Bushkofsky

2024 Conference of Presidents, Women of the ELCA

6 April 2024

Before we get to the roles of the churchwide organization and the synodical organizations, I want to lay some groundwork.

### **1. What is a constitution? An agreement by a group of people on how they will live together and organize themselves.**

For Women of the ELCA, a group of people drafted the constitutions which were presented to the constituting convention of Women of the ELCA in 1987. After debate and conversation, the constitutions were adopted.

Women of the ELCA constitutions have been modified multiple times over the 37 years of the organization's existence. For instance, email didn't exist in 1987 and as email became a more accepted means of communication, the constitution was changed to permit a board to vote via email. In 2021 we proposed changes to allow the triennial convention to occur by digital technology and we had our first digital triennial convention in August of that year.

A well-written constitution provides the mechanism for proposing a change, whether that's an edit or an addition or a deletion. Modifications are to be expected as that group of people live into the agreement on how they will live and work together and as outside forces change.

So, the various constitutions of our organization are an agreement on how we will live and work together to achieve the mission and purpose of Women of the ELCA. Therefore, everyone active in the organization should know what those agreements are. And you, as synodical leaders, most especially need to know what those agreements are. Otherwise, you'll be responding to every whim of participants or movement in society or you'll be making up things and you won't be living up to the constitution.

Make sure that every member and officer of your board has a copy of your SWO constitution (and that it is updated), a copy of the current churchwide constitution and a copy of the model constitution for CUs. And make sure you and they read them!

### **2. We need to speak and write the same language. Otherwise, our communication will be less than optimal and can result in confusion. It is important to be precise.**

You've received a Glossary of Terms. These appeared in the *Convention Program and Reports* prepared for the Twelfth Triennial Convention that was held last fall, so those of

you who were voting members to the convention (and not delegates) should already be familiar with these terms. I say “not delegates” because that term was removed a few years back and the term “voting members” replaced it.

Our constitutions use specific terms, and therefore it is important for everyone to use the same term.

Here is a term that is often misused by people in our organization. Who is a MEMBER? You might think that we, INDIVIDUALS, are members of our congregational units. But that is not so. Our constitutions describe congregational units as MEMBERS of the organization. You and I are called PARTICIPANTS.

I’ve seen many synodical newsletter articles and other documents use the word CIRCLE to refer to people who gather in a congregation. The term CIRCLE isn’t even in our constitutions. Did you know that? A group that gathers in a congregation is called a CONGREGATIONAL UNIT (often shortened to CU). And that’s the term all of us should be using.

Another term that’s used but people use it in different ways: CHURCHWIDE WOMEN’S ORGANIZATION. Some people use that term to refer to the churchwide staff working at 8765 W Higgins Road in Chicago. Some use it to refer to the churchwide executive board, 15 people who function as the organization’s board of directors. Still others use the term to refer to everyone who is part of Women of the ELCA – those in congregational units, those who meet in conferences or clusters, the leadership of synodical organizations, the sum of all the units, the churchwide board members, the staff, everybody! It seems clear to me that the constitution envisions this broad definition of “churchwide women’s organization.”

Become familiar with the glossary of terms and use the terms provided there.

And I’ll end this groundwork sessions by saying that we sometimes use abbreviations – SWO for synodical women’s organization, CWO for churchwide women’s organization and CU for congregational units. I’ll likely fall into using those abbreviations today.

### **3. With that groundwork completed, let’s move on. What do our constitutions say about the role and accountability of the churchwide organization and the synodical organizations to each other and other expressions?**

Did you catch a word I used just then? Expressions? That’s defined in the glossary. There are three EXPRESSIONS in this organization: the unit expression, the synodical expression and the churchwide expression. Since our beginning, Women of the ELCA has been one body organized in three expressions. Each expression has its particular functions but all three together share a common mission and purpose. We are NOT structured hierarchically with levels. There are no “we” and “they” – we are all one, one body in Christ. This is spelled out further in Article VII in the churchwide constitution on Relationships. “Each part shall recognize that it is in a partnership with the others to share in God’s mission.” Partners

don't act unilaterally, they act together, consulting each other, working together. This is something that many participants do not understand. Maybe it is even a new understanding for some of you. But it is key in understanding how each expression functions.

We're going to begin by looking at the **churchwide constitution**. Two observations: there are some provisions within it that apply to all the expressions of the organization and all the participants. And as you will quickly see, all the constitutions of Women of the ELCA are based on interdependence and partnerships. It's fair to say that you can't be operating in this organization unless you are working interdependently and partnering with one another.

Article II, Section 1 is the purpose of Women of the ELCA. In practice we often refer to it as our Purpose Statement. It applies to us all. And you'll find the purpose statement in all constitutions, not just the churchwide constitution.

Article III, Principles of Organization also apply to everyone and all expressions. These are concrete ways in which we have agreed to act. These statements describe our values. "We" -- meaning everyone -- will affirm the worth of each woman, we will all practice inclusivity, we all will be open to change and will practice flexibility, we will follow the principle of good order. These principles express the vision of who and what Women of the ELCA will be -- are we there yet? No. Are we making progress? Yes.

Article III, Section 6 -- let's focus on that. "All entities of the ELCA, the units, the synodical women's organizations, and the churchwide women's organization shall function interdependently and share responsibility for fulfilling the common purpose." There's no we/they. We are all in this together, and we will all work together. Notice it's not just expressions of the women's organization listed here. It's "all entities of the ELCA." What does that mean for SWOs? Beyond working interdependently and sharing responsibility with your congregational units, you need to be functioning interdependently and sharing responsibility with your synods. You need to be doing the same with the CWO and it must do that with the SWOs.

Article IX, Section 3, on Synodical Women's Organizations. "Each synodical women's organization, in partnership with the churchwide women's organization, shall assist units in its territory to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA."

Article X on the Churchwide Women's Organization, describes what the whole organization is to be about, general statements of the actions that we will take. They are mandatory, not optional. Let's just look at Article X, Section 1, Item 2. It provides that our organization shall "witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ as it proclaims reconciliation, dignity, and hope for all persons." That's a general statement and how all the expressions of Women of the ELCA live out that commitment will differ from place to place. But it is clear that we are to be about reconciliation, dignity and hope for all persons.

In Article X, Section 1, Item 7, the churchwide women's organization is charged with fostering "cooperative and interdependent relationships among units, the SWOs and the churchwide women's organization to implement the purpose of Women of the ELCA."

Article X, Section 4, Item 1 (bylaw), "all income, whether received by the unit, cluster or conference, synodical, or churchwide organizations, shall be viewed as being given to the total program of Women of the ELCA."

Article X, Section 4, Item 3, "each entity of Women of the ELCA shall be responsible for the development of a financial plan or budget that reflects interdependence in meeting the financial needs of this organization." Spelled out further in Item 3c, that the SWO budget shall reflect "the interdependent relationships between the SWO and the CWO."

Now, let's turn to the Model Constitution for Synodical Women's Organizations

Article II, you see the same language about the organization's purpose as you did in the churchwide constitution.

Already you will begin to see other relationships, in Article IV. Remember, right now we are focusing on relationships between synodical organizations and the churchwide women's organization.

See Article IV, Section 3 .. (a bylaw) saying the SWO "shall establish a partnership with the churchwide women's organization." There are to be no lone rangers in this organization.

Article V addresses functions and responsibilities. Section I says that the SWO, "in partnership with the churchwide women's organization, clusters or conferences, and units, shall within its territory, established plans and policies to fulfill the purpose of the organization; activate churchwide organization emphases and priorities" and it goes into further detail from there.

Article VI, Section 6, Item 6 (on nominating and electing voting members of the triennial convention) – "A rank order process established by the churchwide women's organization executive board shall be used."

Article VII, Section 7, on board duties, in item 4, requires the SWO to "identify board members for networking between the churchwide organization and the unit in both programmatic and organizational concerns."

Article VIII, financial matters, Section 2, Item 1 provides "the annual budget shall include the SWO program and operating costs and reflect the interdependent relationship between SWO and the CWO" and in Item 2, the proposed annual budget "shall be presented to the churchwide executive board for information" within 30 days of adoption.

Section 5 on regular remittances to the CWO says that regular remittances “shall reflect the interdependent relationship between the SWO and the CWO.”

Finally, Article X, bylaws and amendments addresses ways in which the SWO constitution can be modified or changed, all of which involve some portion of the churchwide constitution.

So, we are **interdependent**. We work in **partnerships**. What will that look like? There’s no one particular way. And how will that interdependence be lived out? There are too many ways to name, but I’ll suggest a couple.

- The way that the CWO works interdependently with a SWO with only 30 units will obviously look different than the way the CWO works interdependently with a SWO with 240 congregational units.
- The shape of partnerships may change over time – an unhealthy SWO might require more of the CWO for a period of time but then, as it becomes more healthy and grows, will require less from the CWO.
- Here’s a simple one: the churchwide women’s organization creates and publishes resources, like our program resources, and the SWO uses them and also promotes them to the CUs. At a SWO convention the SWO might offer a workshop based on one of the resources and in that workshop you would show participants creative ways to use the resource so they can go back to their CU and confidently use that resource themselves.
- In a similar fashion, the churchwide women’s organization publishes a magazine and the SWO promotes that magazine in many ways, including encouraging the CUs to purchase and use it. And maybe the SWO has the author of the Bible study in the magazine to their territory and offers an event where all the participants can come and hear the Bible study author in person.
- Both of these situations show a smart division of labor. We wouldn’t expect a SWO to publish a magazine. A newsletter? Yes, but not a magazine like *Gather*. An individual SWO doesn’t have the money to plan, edit, design, print, and mail a magazine, but when all of the SWOs support the churchwide magazine, a wonderful magazine can be created and provided to all. And by support, I include financial support and promotional support.

And because we are in partnerships with one another, each partner has the opportunity, yes, even the responsibility, to shape the partnership. It’s mutual. It’s not one sided.

I’ve just scratched the surface of what it means to function interdependently and work in partnership with one another. You’ll have an opportunity in small groups to delve into these concepts more fully.

## Questions for small group breakouts

### Session 1

In many portions of both the churchwide constitution and the model constitution for synodical women's organizations, phrases similar to this are used: *the churchwide organization and the synodical organizations shall function interdependently.*

What does that look like in your synodical organization? How is that interdependence lived out? Are there any signs that your synodical organization is acting as a "lone ranger," not working with the churchwide organization? Or vice versa?

Similarly, the churchwide constitute and the model constitution for synodical women's organizations use partnership language. Describe what a well-functioning partnership between synodical organizations and the churchwide organization would look like. You could begin by describing the current partnership and how it might be improved. Consider both sides of the partnership.

## Session 2 – Presenter Notes

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Now we turn to the model constitution for synodical organizations to look at the roles and responsibilities of conferences/clusters, CUs and participants ... and how the synodical organization is called to support each group.

We already know that the purpose of Women of the ELCA (the whole organization) is found both in the churchwide constitution and the model constitution for synodical organizations. But have you ever noticed that the model constitution for synodical organizations states very clearly **the purpose of the SWO**: this is in Article II, Section 1.

The purpose of the SWO “shall be to assist units within its territory to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA.” It’s not optional. There’s “shall” language. This is the barometer by which you should measure everything the SWO does – does this retreat, this workshop, this book study, this website “assist units to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA”? Who are you called to assist? Units.

Moving to Article IV on Relationships, Section 1 lays out the foundational requirement: “This SWO shall establish a partnership with the units within its territory.” Again, it is not optional. The SWO shall establish a partnership with the units.

For instance, a partnership between the Alaska SWO and its units will look very different than a partnership between the Metro Chicago SWO and its units because the context and needs are very different between those Lutherans living in the state of Alaska and those Lutherans living in the city of Chicago and the Chicago suburbs. A partnership between the Grand Canyon SWO and the units in its territory, spread out over several states, will look much different from a partnership between the Southeastern Pennsylvania SWO and the units in its territory which comprises just five counties.

So, there’s no single, uniform design for these 64 sets of partnerships. And the nature of the partnerships between the SWO and its units may change from time to time. But these partnerships are the reason for the SWO’s existence.

The next question is: what are you to be doing in these partnerships? Article V is very clear. Again, what you are doing will depend on your ministry context. And frankly, some of you will have more than one ministry context in your synod’s territory.

What do I mean by ministry context? Many factors shape your ministry context. It could be rural, small town, suburban, urban. Your territory could be primarily farmland (think North

Dakota) or it could be primarily urban (think of the SWOs in Metro NY, Metro Chicago, Metro DC).

Your territory could include many colleges and universities (think Minneapolis Area) or it might be in a Rust Belt.

Your territory might include many immigrants where many languages are spoken – for example, in Austin MN (the Southeastern MN SWO) over 40 languages are spoken by those in the public school system.

One territory might be densely populated with Lutherans. In another territory Lutherans might be few and far between. Those realities in your ministry context help shape your work.

What's the point? Well, if you're a fan of musicals like me, you'll remember Professor Harold Hill singing "you've got to know the territory" in *The Music Man*. And you need to know your synod's territory! That's your starting point. Exercise your interdependence with your synod bishop and the synod office – those folks are working on the same territory and can help you understand the realities in your territory.

Now let's look at Section 1 of Article V. Let's take a few of these and explore them a bit together. These are the things that the constitution says are the functions and responsibilities of the SWO – not the duties of the officers and board members – those are spelled out in Article VII. These are the functions and responsibilities of the SWO. Of course, it is up to the SWO officers and board members to see that all of these are met, but the SWO officers and board members don't have to do this alone ... and should not do this alone. The creative, faithful participants in your territory should be invited into leadership and service on these 14 functions and responsibilities. Remember, these are the things you should be carrying out in partnership with the CUs in your territory.

**Item 1. Establish plans and policies to fulfill the purpose of the organization;**

**Item 2. Activate churchwide organization emphases and priorities;**

First you need to know what are the emphases and priorities of the CWO. A primary shaper of those emphases and priorities is each triennial convention. The voting members of the triennial conventions consider memorials from SWOs, recommendations from the CWO board, and resolutions adopted on the floor of the convention. Those can call into action participants, CUs, SWOs and the CWO organization. They provide our marching orders for the next three years (or beyond). How you carry out those emphases and priorities will differ – the SWOs are not called to accomplish this in lockstep with one another. Depending on your ministry context, you will accomplish them in different ways.



Let's talk about one such action: At the Eleventh Triennial Convention (2021), the voting members adopted a resolution setting the four weeks prior to the annual NFL Super Bowl as a time of prayer to end human trafficking and called on women of this organization engage in prayer. There are many ways that a SWO, its units, and all participants could do what's asked here.

- The churchwide staff provided daily prayers earlier this year, as it did in the last two years, and they could be used in a variety of ways.
- A SWO could hold an online or in-person prayer vigil with some programming around trafficking –
- or a SWO could show its CUs how to do that locally, within a conference or cluster or even in a congregation or in partnership with other ecumenical women's organizations.
- A SWO could produce its own recommended prayers, perhaps inviting every CU to write one prayer petition.
- The SWO could use the daily prayers as a social media post, expanding the reach of the message.

### **Item 3. Stimulate growth in faith and its significance for all of life;**

There are so many ways to stimulate growth in faith – and the way a SWO does that will depend on its ministry context. We'd hope that all would promote Gather magazine so that all participants in your territory are subscribers because Gather's articles, devotions and Bible studies stimulate growth in faith.

Some SWOs, 30+ years ago, would hold a synod-wide event called a spiritual growth retreat (I don't know if any still do) which was a daylong event that offered worship, workshops, advocacy and more, all designed to stimulate growth in faith.

The speakers you select for a SWO convention can also be intentionally selected so that their words stimulate growth in faith. And you can offer workshops that do the same.

### **Item 4. Recruit, prepare, and support leaders;**

This is a crucial task of the SWO. Valora is fond of saying we are a leader-full organization. She's right -- our organization is filled with women of all ages and abilities who are leaders. They use their God-given leadership skills in the classroom, in the home, in service groups, in the office, in a daycare setting. The SWO must develop ways to recruit these women, to prepare these women and to support them in their leadership.

Some of you will not like to hear this, but the fact that you are having difficulty finding women willing to run for an office or a board or to be nominated as a voting member to the triennial convention is a reflection on how well or not the SWO has recruited, prepared and

supported leaders. And that's not just recruiting, preparing and supporting leaders in the last year but over several years.

It's a lot of work to recruit, prepare and support leaders, but it is essential for the health of the organization. At a minimum, this recruiting, preparing and supporting leaders is the responsibility of every officer and board member. Not only will you take on this crucial task, but you will create an environment throughout everything the SWO does that recruits, prepares, and supports leaders.

First, you have to foster an open and welcoming environment, a place in which people will want to spend their time and give of their skills. With so much competition for our time and money and creativity in our busy world, it's simply a reality that we must make Women of the ELCA a place where people will want to be. Here are some concrete ideas.

- You'll invite a new participant to partner with a more seasoned participant in leading a workshop.
- You'll invite newer participants to serve on committees and you will welcome their questions and gifts.
- You'll secure a cadre of homebound participants who will regularly pray for the officers, the board, the nominating committee, and all participants in your territory.

These are just a few suggestions – you can share more when you go back to your small groups in breakout.

And when it comes to the nominating committee, you'll fill it with more than just warm bodies, you will fill it with participants who are sensitive and caring, who know lots of people, who understand the positions to be filled. You'll get that nominating committee working early and you'll support them in whatever ways will help them fulfill their critical role.

**Item 5. Work within the church and society for the affirmation of women and the utilization of their gifts for ministry;**

**Item 6. Promote and advocate for peace and justice in cooperation with others;**

**Item 7. Foster creative programming in units and clusters or conferences;**

- Fostering creative programming – what does that look like? So many answers!
- Sharing and encouraging the use of resources created by the CWO is one.
- Modeling creative programming at synodical events is another, whether that's in Bible study or in workshops or even in the fellowship hour.
- Turning to other leaders in your synod – perhaps Christian education heads or those in church-related colleges or seminaries on your territory – for ideas, help, suggestions.

- Maybe you hold a day for a SWO event where you bring in several creative presenters and they help teach ways to be creative in presentations, activities, service, etc.
- Have a healthy CU present at a SWO event, explaining how they operate, what they do, how they are organized, etc.

**Item 8. Assist units to design appropriate structure for effective functioning;**

**Item 9. Assist in building supportive and interdependent relationships among individuals and units, and, shall strive to foster the grouping of units in clusters or conferences;**

**Item 10. Promote and interpret the life and work of the organization within the organization and the church and to the general public;**

**Item 11. Establish financial policies, build budgets, and encourage support of the financial objectives of the synodical women's organization by individuals and units;**

**Item 12. Establish and promote ecumenical relationships, consistent with churchwide policy;**

**Item 13. Provide for synodical women's organization conventions; and**

**Item 14. Provide materials and historical information for the archivist.**

Again, let me emphasize that the way these are accomplished in the Southwestern Texas SWO can look significantly different than the way they are accomplished in the New England SWO or the Montana SWO. Your commitments are the same but how you accomplish those commitments will vary from SWO to SWO, and even within your SWO.

All of this might sound a bit overwhelming to you about now. Take a deep breath. Begin by resting surely in the promise that God the creator, God the redeemer and God the sustainer is with you and all of us as we gather as Women of the ELCA. As I've heard our president, Myrna Wells-Ulland say recently, "God's got this."

Having reminded yourself of God's presence, remind yourself that this organization runs on interdependence and partnerships. Yes, the SWO has to do its own part, pull its own weight in all of this, but synodical leaders do have others to turn to for inspiration, for support, for prayer, for an understanding shoulder, as it were. You can call on members of the churchwide executive board, many of whom have held positions as synodical officers. You can call on churchwide staff members. You can call on each other. You can call on the other participants in your CU. You can call on your bishop and other leaders in your synod.

But if, after reflection, you cannot commit to this, if you cannot commit to what is needed to carry out the duties and responsibilities, then do everyone a favor, yourself included, and step down. Extend yourself that grace. Extend that grace to others on your current board who might need to step down.

And a closing reminder. When we act interdependently and are in partnership with each other, we have to care for each other and nurture that relationship. Our executive board members need to pray for the leaders of each SWO and vice versa. The SWO board members need to pray for and support the leaders of the CUs in their territory and vice versa. Participants everywhere need to pray that we, all working together, will live out our purpose, achieve our mission as Women of the ELCA. We need to be realistic in how we can achieve that purpose, our mission. We need to extend grace to each other when one of us fails to live up to our expectations. We need to treat each other as members of the body of Christ.

## Questions for small group breakouts

### Session 2

The model constitution for synodical organizations requires each SWO to **establish a partnership with the units within its territory.**

Does a partnership currently exist between the SWO and its units in your territory? How do you define what that partnership needs to encompass in your territory? Discuss the elements of that partnership. What are the ways in which a SWO can create and nurture a partnership with its units?

Looking at Article V, Section 1 the functions and responsibilities of the SWO, answer these questions noting that you are responsible for these things “*in partnership with the churchwide women’s organization*”:

1. Is your SWO achieving everything from Item 1 through Item 14? If not, why not? Which items have been ignored?
2. Do you know where you would locate the churchwide organization emphases and priorities mentioned in Item 2?

Does your SWO work interdependently with the conferences or clusters in your SWO? How so? How could that interdependence be strengthened? Note in Article IV, Section 2, Item 2, the outcomes of that interdependence are described.

What are the benefits of a healthy relationship between your SWO and your synod? (See Article IV, Section 5) If you don’t have a healthy relationship between you and your synod, how can you work to create that?

## **Session 3 – Presenter Notes**

**Linda Post Bushkofsky**

**2024 Conference of Presidents, Women of the ELCA**

**6 April 2024**

Now we're going to spend some time on how to assist participants with discerning their role and responsibilities.

We should likely start by answering the question, who is a participant? Again, our constitutions define who is a participant. In article V of the churchwide constitution, there are two relevant descriptions.

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

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

### **SECTION 2. Commitment**

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

So, section 1 requires a woman who is a member of an ELCA congregation or any other women to “subscribe to the purpose of this organization.” To subscribe – that means to make a conscious decision to be part of this organization.

That doesn't mean that every woman in an ELCA congregation is a participant in Women of the ELCA. That's a myth based in a truth about a predecessor organization, but it is not true!

Women have to make a conscious decision to be part of this organization.

And what is required of these women? The way they participate in Women of the ELCA indicates a commitment to the purpose of Women of the ELCA. If someone just shows up for the snacks, that's not a commitment to the purpose. How does a woman indicate her commitment to the purpose? By growing in faith through Bible studies and regular attendance at worship, by affirming her own gifts as well as the gifts of other, supporting other women in their callings, engaging in ministry and action – hands on service, advocacy work, etc. and promoting healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

And there is no one way that a participant does all this, and I suggest we should have a generous understanding of how a participant shows commitment to the organization. But let's be honest, Women of the ELCA is not a social organization, it's not a women's

auxiliary, it's not a card group. It's a serious and brave thing to make a commitment to our purpose.

Now, let's assume you have a groups of participants (or maybe they also include some women who are thinking of becoming participants). What's your first step? Figure out ways to be in conversation with these participants. Maybe you and your board members go on an in-person listening tour to every CU. Maybe you hold listening sessions in each conference or cluster event. Maybe you call and speak with the leader of each CU.

Remember, the SWO is to be in partnership with the CUs and so you have to talk with each other. Figure out the needs, offer suggestions, bring information back from the triennial convention, support one another. Encourage the CUs to try new things, expand the group that sits around the table. Hear their concerns. Help them remember the principles of our organization found in Article III of the churchwide constitution. You might find that a group here or there really only wants to be a social club and really aren't committed to the purpose of Women of the ELCA. That's fine. Send them on their way, encouraging them to contribute the balance of their checking account and any other financial assets to the churchwide organization and have them find a new name for themselves. You might find that other groups really get fired up once they are reminded of who we are and what we are called to do.

Remember that Women of the ELCA is not a one-size-fits-all organization. How the participants organize is up to them. How they choose to live out the Purpose Statement is up to them. There are few things that are expected of every CU.

Help CUs to find any existing constitutions they have and if they don't have any, which is true of many, work with them to adopt the model constitution which you'll find in the Tools for Leaders section of [welca.org](http://welca.org).

Once you've established a relationship, a partnership with your CUs then you need to maintain it. Figure out a way for your board and officers to do just that. Some boards divvy up the list of CUs and each is responsible for a certain number of them. There are basic expectations of what the board member must do – be in touch with each unit at least once a year, send notes of encouragement, attend an event now and again, etc.

And when you're in conversation with the participants in each CU, please check on what they are using in their setting. Get them to use the most recent iteration of our resources. With some regularity, we have women using a Chicago PO Box in sending in their offerings. We haven't used that in years! We've been using the ELCA Gift Distribution Center in Virginia for about 10 years now. Some participants kept large quantities of old resources and continue to use them. Take along a recycling bin and invite them to recycle! Get them using all the wonderful resources that are online. And if getting online is an issue, work with them to figure out a way to get their resources with the help of someone else.

Communication is essential here. You must communicate regularly and often. People receive information and messages in different ways and you have to use many different ways. Sending a letter to a congregation or putting up a flyer on a church bulletin board may not cut it. They may work in some places but not everywhere. You need to use all kinds of communication methods and if some of them feel foreign to you, find someone else to use them for you.

And finally, when you are in partnership with those CUs, together you can live out the constitutional roles and responsibilities that I described in the last instructional session, all 14 of them!

## Questions for small group breakouts<sup>1</sup>

### Session 3

Think about your SWO's programming over the past 3-5 years (go further back if your SWO was fallow during the active time of the pandemic, basically March 2020 through September 2023).

- Did you convey triennial convention directives to your units, conferences, clusters? And support them in achieving the directives? Did you provide programming around the triennial convention directives?
- Did you provide programming in support of the Principles of Organization found in the churchwide constitution?
- Did you provide programming in support of Katie's Fund, Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls, anti-racism efforts, anti-trafficking efforts, anti-domestic violence efforts? Did you use programs and resources created by and provided free by the churchwide organization around these initiatives? Do you promote *Gather* and show ways to use *Gather* in programming?
- Did you promote and participate in any of the online events created by and provided free by the churchwide organization?
  - Monthly B.Y.O.D. conversations
  - Blue Christmas services
  - Advent devotions sponsored by Gather,
  - Book discussions in March 2022 for Women's History Month
  - Book discussions in August 2023 with Indigenous writers

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<sup>1</sup> There was not a breakout session after Session 3 at the Conference of Presidents. These questions, nonetheless, could generate healthy discussion within a synodical board, for instance, based on the content of Session 3.

- Anti-trafficking prayers for the four weeks leading up to the Super Bowl
  - Live conversations on Facebook called Just Lunch (both in the months leading up to the Just Love gathering and also more recently for Women's History Month 2024)
- If you answered no to any of these questions, was your decision born of the partnership and interdependence with the churchwide women's organization or was it born of something else?