



October 30, 2024

Dear Women of the ELCA,

At the 12th triennial convention in Phoenix in 2023, harm was caused to many of you during the election process. We apologize for this harm and its continuing effects.

Women of the ELCA has constitutional requirements to ensure that the executive board includes women of color and/or women whose primary language is other than English, women under the age of 45 and/or members of the LGBTQIA+ community, among other requirements that include having equitable representation from each region. We recognize there was not a clear process in place to ensure these results, and mistakes were made.

We apologize that in the process, some nominees who were women of color and who received a majority of votes on the first ballot were not declared elected. The election process caused confusion and hurt. We acknowledge conscious and unconscious racial bias was present during this time. We apologize especially for the way the process demeaned those women who initially were not elected. We apologize for the harm it caused to the nominees who are now our board members. We apologize for the spiritual harm on all those participating in the process and the broken trust among members of our community. The Board and staff are appreciative of those women who raised concerns about the process and all those who boldly act in their faith to continue to work towards more just and equitable governance structures in Women of the ELCA.

We acknowledge with St. Paul, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. . . . If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12: 12, 26)

Going forward, the Executive Board has adopted the following recommendations from the task force who reviewed the 12th Triennial Convention elections:

- Create a plan for addressing election processes that establish priority of potentially conflicting constitutional mandates for board demographic makeup.
- Implement training for the conduct of elections committee, ahead of the triennial convention.
- Nominate as chair for the conduct of elections committee someone who has previously served on that committee.
- Appoint alternate committee members in case anyone on the committee is nominated to the Women of the ELCA executive board and therefore needs to be excused from serving on the conduct of elections committee.
- Update the nominee biographical forms to include all pertinent constitutional requirements (e.g., geographical location, age, person of color and/or person whose primary language is other than English, person of LGBTQIA+ community)

to ensure that the organization is maintaining its commitment to inclusive representation.

- Distribute nominee biographical information from the nominating committee as part of the preconvention reports, in advance of the convention, in accordance with Article XI, Section 3, Item 3.

The board, also, referred the following recommendations to the constitutional review committee:

- Utilize the existing policy for rank order voting process for the election of the Women of the ELCA Executive Board.
- When electing churchwide women's organization officers, strive to ensure that each comes from a different region.

As an organization, we are committed to undo racism and move toward reconciliation, healing and embracing all people. 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. Let us all work to continue to live out our purpose statement.

In faith on behalf of the churchwide executive board and staff,



Myrna Wells Ulland

President



Jennifer Hockenbery

Interim Executive Director