

## TRAVEL EXPENSE GUIDELINES

*These guidelines will help you make cost-effective travel plans within our policies and obtain reimbursement for expenses. To obtain reimbursement, receipts must be provided for all expenses, with the exception of mileage and gratuities.*

### Airfare Booking Guidelines

Please review these guidelines. They are intended to clarify the often confusing process of booking airline tickets. If you have any questions or need to request an exception, call the event planner immediately.

#### **Event participants are expected to:**

**Book travel through the organization's authorized travel agent.** Booking through the authorized travel agent helps reduce our travel expenses and may give the organization credit toward free airfares.

**Accept the lowest fare** available at the time of reservation.

If a participant is able to secure a lower airfare by making a purchase directly on her own, she may do this providing she first secures a quote from the organization's authorized travel agent. The participant would then submit a copy of her actual expenditure along with the quote from the organization's authorized travel agent for reimbursement.

**Make airline reservations no later than 30 days in advance** to obtain maximum cost savings.

**Plan carefully.** Tickets are non-refundable and non-transferable; **costs for changes and cancellations are your responsibility.** Cancellation of already booked airline tickets must be made no later than 24 hours prior to departure. Tickets must be re-booked with new itinerary within 1 year of booking, otherwise tickets will be null and void. If you are unable to attend an event after your airline reservation is booked, you will be expected to reimburse the organization for the cost of the airline ticket.

Women of the ELCA will cover the cost to check one piece of luggage with an airline for those who travel on behalf of the churchwide women's organization. Secure a receipt for the checked luggage and submit it for reimbursement using an ELCA expense report form.

**Book travel for the approved itinerary** of the event.

The travel agent is authorized to charge only official travel to Women of the ELCA. If you add personal travel to your itinerary, you will be asked to pay for your flight.

To receive reimbursement for the approved itinerary, submit an expense report after the event.

### Do I Drive or Fly?

Mileage to and from an event will be reimbursed up to the amount of the lowest approved airfare. (For example, if the lowest approved airfare is \$300, but you choose to drive and the cost of driving is \$500, you will only be reimbursed \$300; the remaining \$200 will be your responsibility.) To ensure proper reimbursement, a written airfare quotation from the authorized travel agent should accompany your expense report. Reimbursement will be at the mileage rate in effect at the time of the event.\* In addition, when submitting mileage for reimbursement, you are required to verify the distance traveled with a printout from Mapquest.com (or a similar app), attached to the expense form, showing the mileage.

Tolls and parking will be included in your reimbursement as long as the total amount (mileage, tolls, and parking) does not exceed the comparable airfare cost.

### What about carpooling?

Carpooling is encouraged because it can lead to significant savings. When two or more individuals carpool, mileage will be reimbursed up to the amount of actual mileage or the amount of the combined airfares, whichever is lower. When you submit an expense report requesting mileage reimbursement, please list the name of each individual traveling in the car. This information will ensure reimbursement in the correct amount.

### Travel to the airport

The cost of your travel to and from the airport will also be reimbursed (for example, taxi or mileage plus airport parking). Please choose the lowest cost option: round-trip taxi fare may cost less than several days of airport parking, for example, or vice versa.

### Rental Cars

Rental of a car or van in connection with a Women of the ELCA event must be approved in advance by the event planner.

\* As of January 1, 2026, the mileage reimbursement rate is 72.5 cents per mile.

## Food

The actual cost of meals, including tip, will be reimbursed if a meal is not provided as a part of the event. Meal expenditures should be reasonable and customary for the area in which the event is held, and an itemized receipt must be provided.

Meal costs will not be reimbursed if you decide to purchase a meal instead of eating the meal provided as part of the event. **Doctor prescribed or other special dietary requirements must be communicated to the event planner at least 72 hours in advance.**

The cost of alcoholic beverages will not be reimbursed.

## Lodging

Lodging expenses will be paid according to the guidelines for the specific event. Women of the ELCA generally pays for room and tax at the designated facility. Miscellaneous room expenses such as telephone calls, movies, alcoholic beverages, in-room mini bars, and gift shop items will not be reimbursed by the churchwide organization.

Women of the ELCA's policy is to room participants two to a room (with two beds). Those desiring a single occupancy room are responsible for the full cost of the room. Individuals requiring Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accommodations for lodging should inform the event planner of that need and each request will be handled separately.

## Meals and lodging in transit

Requests for reimbursement of meals or lodging in transit to an event must be approved in advance by the event planner.

## Special Expenses

Questions about additional costs or unusual expenses must be discussed with the event planner before the event or before any expenses are incurred.

## Tips

Tips are a necessary and reasonable travel expense. The following are general tipping guidelines:

**taxi drivers:** 15 to 20 percent of the fare and \$1 per bag

**hotel staff:** \$1 or \$2 per bag

**server/waitstaff:** 15 to 20 percent of the cost of food (excluding tax) on a full-service meal

**housekeeping:** \$2 per day per person

## Expense Reports

Please use an ELCA expense report form to apply for reimbursement within 30 days of an event. Receipts are

required for all items with the exception of mileage and gratuities. In the case of gratuities, an explanation is needed as indicated on the form. Payment will be mailed approximately three weeks after an expense report is received. You can find the expense report online at: <http://www.elca.org/en/Resources/Financial>

Remember to sign the expense report; it cannot be processed without a signature. Also, include a signed copy for all electronic expense reports. We are unable to reimburse expenses incurred more than 120 days before the expense is submitted.

## Contributing Your Expenses

To donate your expenses, please submit a completed expense report, and upon receipt of your reimbursement check, you may either endorse the check and return it to Women of the ELCA or deposit it and then write out a personal check in the amount of the expenses and send it to Women of the ELCA. An acknowledgment of your donation will be sent following processing.

## Travel Accident Insurance

All synodical and churchwide officers and volunteers (including resource persons) attending authorized meetings of the organization are covered for accidental death and dismemberment.

## Air Travel Insurance

In addition to the ELCA's Travel Accident Insurance, coverage, every individual traveling on a ticket purchased through Direct Travel is covered by the Mastercard Travel Accident Insurance with a benefit up to \$100,000. This coverage is in force while the traveler is "riding in, boarding, alighting from, or being struck by any common carrier conveyance on a Covered Trip." It is provided free of charge through the ELCA's airline ticket purchase agreement with Mastercard.

The churchwide organization considers it our responsibility to inform participants and their estates of this insurance coverage. For more information, please contact Rob Thoma at 800-638-3522, ext. 2403.

## Making Your Reservation

Contact the ELCA travel desk, staffed by Direct Travel personnel, at 800-543-8016. You will need the event or meeting name, the business purpose, and the account number provided to you by the event planner to make your reservation. Please contact the event planner, whose name is on your confirmation letter, at 800-638-3522, ext. 2730, if you have any questions.