



MESSIAH MESSENGER

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National ELW Board Makes Spirit-led Decision

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Last week an ELW e-news indicated that the National ELW Board was meeting regarding the future of the organization. At a very spirit-led meeting, after prayer and discussion, the National Board determined that the most responsible path is to enter into a process of dissolution.



Evangelical Lutheran Women Inc. has been a leader in biblical reflection, learning about social justice issues and service within the ELCIC.

Pam Radunsky, National ELW president states, "ELW has offered me and countless others unique opportunities to grow as women of faith within this church. We have spent many hours as a Board prayerfully considering what God is calling us to do. Our mission and vision have been clearly before us and we have listened carefully to what ELW women and our staff have said to us. While this decision has been difficult, we believe it is responding faithfully to the realities with which ELW is faced. We step out in faith, for 'We know that in everything God works for good with those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose.' Romans 8:28."

There are several reasons for dissolution of the organization. For years we have watched the average age of key supporters go up. Five years ago a demographic survey revealed that 80% of women participating in ELW were over the age of 65 with most being over 70. Less and less of the material produced for the organization was being used.

A natural consequence is that income, primarily through Grace Gifts, was not increasing. Giving levels have remained steady with a slight decrease in giving since 1996. At the same time costs associated with running an organization have increased significantly.

Over and over, ELW board and staff have heard women say that they would continue to gather even if the organization didn't exist. And that is what we hope will happen.

By deciding to dissolve now, ELW will be able to leave a legacy by setting up a special fund within the ELCIC. The terms of the fund have yet to be determined, however, its purpose will be to continue to support the ELCIC and women's ministry.

"I was incredibly saddened to learn of the decision to dissolve Evangelical Lutheran Women," said ELCIC National Bishop Susan C. Johnson, "but at the same time I admire the courage of the board in facing difficult realities and making this very hard decision. The ELCIC has always valued and, indeed, treasured our partnership with Evangelical Lutheran Women. We are honoured to be the recipient of a fund that will continue to encourage and facilitate the ministry of women within our church."

The decision to dissolve is effective immediately. We know there will be many questions. A FAQ sheet will be prepared and posted on the ELW website within the next two days. However here are a few immediate answers.

There will be gradual lay off of ELW staff over the next few months beginning in July. The Fall edition of *Esprit* will not be published; a decision about the 2011 Bible study has yet to be made and will be announced shortly; here will be no Fall Event materials distributed.

Grace Gifts: ELWs are asked to be as generous as they can with Grace Gifts so that ELW can meet its financial obligations as an organization. For now, continue to send these gifts to your Synodical Treasurer. A date will be given later when gifts will need to be sent directly to the ELW office.

Praise Offering: The ELCIC has budgeted for this money for 2010. We ask that Co-ELWs continue to hold their services and send money to their Synodical Treasurers. Similar to Grace Gifts, a date will be provided later when these funds should be sent directly to the ELW office.

We know that women across Canada will grieve the loss of this organization. We encourage you to gather together and celebrate the ministry it has provided to you. If you would like to connect with women across Canada there are two ways to do this.

1. Send a comment to any one of the ELW staff and a page will be started at where your thoughts, good wishes, memories will be posted. Please allow the staff a couple of days to get this activated.
2. You may go to Facebook and look up the group “hear, speak and act—Communicate” and post comments.

The following was shared by Ruth Magnuson with the board on Saturday after the decision was made, tears flowed, joys and sorrows of life and death discussed:

‘We are now at the beginning of our pilgrimage, the time for departure has come. To be a pilgrim is to be on one’s way—on one’s way towards a goal...A pilgrimage, however is not an escape from life itself, to alienate us from it. Rather, it is a pilgrimage with God in order to dare to be in life. The pilgrimage in an old tradition reminds us that life is a walking from birth to death with God—of, by and to God. Life is a process with God, with ourselves and with other people... When we now, in the hands of God, venture ourselves into new territory, let us remind each other of God’s promises on the journey of life.’ (from *Sinfonia Oecumenica*, Pilgrimages, pg. 345-346.)

May the peace of God be with you all.

Ruth Magnuson
Executive Director

Pam Radunsky
National ELW President