

**CONSTITUTION OF THE PRAYER WOMEN'S LEAGUE
OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

1. NAME

- 1.1 The organization shall be known as the Prayer Women's League of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
- 1.2 The ELCSA Prayer Women's League is constituted as an organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and as such is subject to the constitution of ELCSA.

2. AIM

To work and pray for the promotion and expansion of the kingdom of God amongst all people.

3. OBJECTIVES AND DUTIES

- 3.1 In pursuance of the above stated aim it shall be the duty of every member of the league:
 - 3.1.1 To take part faithfully in the meetings, the planning, the work and the projects of the League;
 - 3.1.2 To meet at least once a week to pray and to help one another with the Word of God.
 - 3.1.3 To minister to and cooperate with all women in the church, especially in projects of upgrading, development and empowerment.
 - 3.1.4 To strive for the redemption of all those who have become victims of the ravages of intoxicating liquor, drugs, sex, child, **women and parent** abuse, and broken homes.
 - 3.1.5 To refrain and dissuade others from taking part in practices, superstitions, beliefs, witchcraft and immoral rituals that does not conform to Christian faith.
 - 3.1.6 To lead a faithful life of daily worship.
 - 3.1.7 To make her home a Christian one by observing family prayers and leading a Christian life, and also encourage her husband and children.
 - 3.1.8 To set an example of being a good Christian neighbour in the Church and in the community as a whole.
- 3.2 **As a member of ELCSA**
 - 3.2.1 To attend regularly church services and participates in the life of the congregation.
 - 3.2.2 To support all church activities, working hand in hand with pastors and other leaders in the congregation.
 - 3.2.3 To help in the teaching of Sunday school and in advising confirmation class girls and others who are passing through the age of puberty on sex and its abuses.
 - 3.2.4 To support stewardship and diaconate work in the church.

3.2.5 To assist in the work of evangelization amongst non-believers, and make home visits for the sake of spiritually reviving members of the church who have become irregular in attendance of church services.

3.2.6 To visit patients in homes and hospitals to comfort the old and depressed, with the Word of God and prayer, as well as helping them with regard to the needs of the body.

3.2.7 To take responsibility for cleaning and decorating of the church and its surroundings, and encourage other women to assist in keeping the church neat and tidy.

3.3 As a member of the ecumenical family:

3.3.1 The league shall cooperate with other organizations of the church and other churches, provided such cooperation does not violate the confessional basis of the league and the church.

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Membership shall be open to all women who are full contributing members of a congregation of ELCSA, who are involved in the spreading of the gospel, who partake in the sacraments and lead an exemplary life.

4.2 Members who seek admission on transfer from other parishes shall be accepted on production of a certifying letter from the leader and pastor of her former group.

4.3 Members coming from other churches shall be accepted after they have become full members of the Lutheran Church, and shall be formally installed after **5.1** and **5.2** have been applied.

5. PROBATION

5.1 An intending member shall present herself to the local committee of the league who in turn shall inform the congregational council through the pastor-in-charge. The new recruit shall be put on a probationary period of six months.

5.2 During the period of probation the constitution of the league shall be thoroughly explained to and be comprehended by the probationer, who shall participate in the activities of the congregational group, of the Parish and of the Circuit.

6. INSTALLATION

6.1 The day of installation shall be decided upon by the congregational committee in consultation with the parish pastor and the parish committee.

6.1.1 A candidate for installation shall provide herself with prescribed uniform with the exception of the brooch, which shall be supplied by the local committee.

The brooch shall remain the property of the league and be returned to the league at death.

6.1.2 The installation ceremony shall be performed in a divine service by a pastor, who shall be assisted by **leaders** of the league. The officiating pastor shall follow the order of service of ELCSA drawn up for the purpose,

6.1.3 The aim and objectives of the league shall be read by the chairperson or any delegated member.

6.2 There shall be a ceremony of re-registration and re-commitment at the beginning of each year, conducted by the local Pastor.

6.3 **LOSS OF PRIVILEGES**

6.3.1 Any member who violates the constitution of the league shall be exhorted and admonished by the congregational committee. If she fails to heed, the local committee shall recommend her suspension. After thorough investigation by the parish committee, and the matter not being successfully resolved, it shall be referred to the circuit committee. The decision of the Circuit Committee the brooch shall be withdrawn by the congregational committee and a relevant announcement made to the respective league and the congregation.

6.3.2 After appropriate corrective action, re-installation shall take place in the local congregation in a divine service. Refer to **6.1.2.**

7. ORGANIZATION

7.1 All pastors' and evangelists' wives and deaconesses shall automatically be members of the league.

8. The organisation of the league shall consist of the following committees at each levels:

8.1 **Congregational Committee**

8.1.1 As church workers, deaconesses shall be ex officio members of the congregational committee. The pastor' wife/or evangelist's wife shall be the Ex officio Chairlady. Where there is no pastor or evangelist the wife of the leader of the congregation shall be the chairlady.

8.1.2 Other Office bearers shall be the vice-chairlady, secretary, assistant secretary and the treasurer, who shall be nominated and elected from amongst the full members of the congregational group.

8.1.3 To form a quorum at least half the number of members including the chairlady, or in her absence the vice chairlady, or in her absence the secretary shall be present. In the event of none of the aforementioned office bearers being present, no meeting shall be held.

8.1.4 Where the membership of the congregational group is less than ten, assistant officials and additional committee members shall be elected and where the membership is more than thirty, not more than four shall be elected.

8.1.5 The pastor, evangelist or designated helper shall be the spiritual advisor of the league at local level.

He/she Shall officiate at elections and inductions of committees.

He/she shall have the right to attend all meetings of the league as an ex officio member.

- 8.1.6 Elections shall be done by secret ballot. They hold office for six year, and shall be eligible for re-election.

8.2 **DUTIES**

- 8.2.1 The pastor's or evangelist's wife shall be Ex officio chairlady of the league at the congregational level. The chairlady shall be responsible for the co-ordination, organisation and functioning of the league in her congregation.

The committee shall:

- 8.2.2 discuss and plan the activities of the congregational group in accordance with par. 3.
- 8.2.3 inform the congregational council about those who wish to join the league.
- 8.2.4 explain the constitution to the probationers. In case of very small groups this should be done by members of the parish committee.
- 8.2.5 admonish fellow-members who lead a life unbecoming a Christian and thus violate the constitution of the league.
- 8.2.6 see to it that attendance and subscription registers are kept and that a roll call is taken at the end of the weekly meeting.
- 8.2.7 give annual written reports which shall include audited financial statements. The report shall be copied to the congregational league, the pastor and the parish meeting.
- 8.2.8 control funds and property of the league.
The inventory of property shall be sent to the Parish Pastor concerned annually.
- 8.2.9 scrutinize motions to be presented to a joint parish meeting of the congregational committees.
- 8.2.10 Refer difficulties that cannot be resolve to the parish committee.

9. **THE PARISH COMMITTEE**

- 9.1 As church workers deaconesses are ex-officio members and shall attend and assist in all parish gatherings of the league.
- 9.1.1 The Parish Pastor's wife shall be an Ex officio chairlady of the league in the parish.
- 9.1.2 Other Office bearers shall be the vice-chairlady, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer and four additional committee members, who shall be nominated and elected at a joint parish meeting from amongst the members of the congregational committees of the parish.
- 9.1.3** Elections shall be done by secret ballot. They shall hold office for six years and shall be eligible for re-election.
- 9.1.4 Committee meetings shall be held quarterly. Extra-ordinary meetings shall be called as necessary by the chairlady in consultation with the Committee.

9.1.5 To form a quorum at least half the number of members including the chairlady, or in her absence the vice chairlady or in her absence the secretary shall be present. In the event of none of the aforementioned office bearers being present, no meeting shall be held.

9.1.6 The Parish Pastor shall be the spiritual advisor of the league in his/her parish. He/she shall officiate at elections, induct committee members, and conduct official openings of conferences and workshops on Parish level.

He/she shall have the right to attend all meetings and conferences held in the parish.

9.2 DUTIES

9.2.1 The chairlady shall be responsible for the co-ordination, organisation and functioning of the league in her parish.

She shall together with her committee

9.2.2 organize the quarterly meetings of the parish committee, and prepare the agenda.

9.2.3 deal with those difficulties which cannot be settled by the congregational committees and congregational councils.

If they do not succeed they shall refer the matter to the circuit league committee.

9.2.4 attend to recommendations on the suspension and the ultimate withdrawal of brooches by the congregational committee.

9.2.5 give a written report which shall include an audited financial statement at the annual parish meeting and the annual circuit conference. The report shall be copied to the parish, the Parish Pastor and the chairlady of the circuit.

9.2.6 Control the funds and property of the league on parish level. Keep all records and files in the Church Office. Inventory of properties and statistics shall be sent to the Parish Pastor annually.

9.2.7 scrutinize all motions to be presented to the circuit conference.

9.2.8 attend to vacancies which may occur in any of the offices.

9.2.9 See to it that the aims, objectives and constitution of the league are observed faithfully and effectively in the parish.

10. THE CIRCUIT COMMITTEE

10.1 The chairlady shall be the Dean's wife. She shall be the ex officio chairlady of the league in the circuit.

10.1.1 Other Office bearers shall be the vice-chairlady, secretary, assistant secretary, treasurer and not more than four additional members elected at an annual circuit conference.

10.1.2 Elections shall be done by secret ballot. Candidates for elections shall be nominated and elected from amongst the members of the parish committee. They shall hold office for six years, and are eligible for re-election.

- 10.1.3 The circuit committee shall meet at least twice a year and whenever need arises. To form a quorum at least half the number of members including the chairlady, or in her absence the vice chairlady, or in her absence the secretary shall be present.

In the event of none of the aforementioned office bearers being present, no meeting shall be held.

- 10.1.4 The Dean shall be spiritual advisor of the league in his/her circuit.
He/she shall have the right to attend all meetings and conferences in his/her circuit.
He/she shall officiate at elections, induct committee members and at official openings of conferences, workshops etc. in his/her circuit.

10.2 **DUTIES**

- 10.2.1 The chairlady shall be responsible for the co-ordination and functioning of the league in her circuit.

The Chairlady together with her committee shall:

- 10.2.2 Plan and draw the agenda for the meetings of the committee.
- 10.2.3 See to it that the aims, duties objectives and constitution of the league are carried out faithfully and effectively in the circuit.
- 10.2.4 Arrange revivals, conferences, workshops, seminars and meetings with the assistance of sisters deaconesses and church workers in the circuit.
- 10.2.5 Control funds and properties of the league in the circuit.
Inventory of property shall be sent to the Dean of the circuit annually.
- 10.2.6 See to it that all financial books of the league in the circuit are audited.
- 10.2.7 Give a written report to the annual circuit meeting and at the annual circuit league conference, which shall include an audited financial statement. The report shall be copied to the circuit, the Dean, the diocesan Women's Desk.
- 10.2.8 Scrutinize all motions to be presented to the diocesan conference.
- 10.2.9 Fill vacancies, which may occur in any of the offices.
- 10.2.10 Co-ordinate with the Diocesan and ELCSA Women's Desk Officers through the diocesan secretaries and plan development workshops in co-operation with the Diocesan Women's Desks.

11. **THE DIOCESAN COMMITTEE**

- 11.1.1 The Bishop's wife shall be the ex officio chairlady of the league in the diocese.
- 11.1.2 Ex officio members of the committee shall be all Deans' wives and the Circuit secretaries.

11.1.3 Elected Office bearers shall be the vice-chairlady, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer.

How big shall the Committee be?

11.1.4 The committee shall be nominated and elected from amongst members of circuit committees and delegates attending the conference. The three additional delegates are elected to attend ELCSA conference. They shall hold office for a period of six years and are eligible for re-election. Elections shall be held by secret ballot.

11.1.5 The chairlady, secretary, treasurer and one member Elected by the diocesan committee from amongst their members shall act as an executive committee.

11.1.6 The diocesan committee shall meet once a year and when need arises. To form a quorum at least half the number of members including the chairlady, or in her absence the vice chairlady, or in her absence the secretary shall be present. In the event of none of the aforementioned office bearers being present, no meeting shall be held.

11.1.7 The diocesan Desk Officer shall be an ex officio member of the diocesan committee.

11.2 **DUTIES**

11.2.1 The Bishop's wife is ex officio chairlady of the League in the Diocese: She shall be responsible for the coordinating, organisation and functioning of the league in her diocese.

11.2.2 **The chairlady and her committee shall:**
Be responsible for the life and work of the league in the diocese.

11.2.3 prepare and plan meetings of the committee, bi-ennial conference and its programme,

11.2.4 Co-ordinate the work in the various circuits of the diocese.

11.2.5 Give a written report at the diocesan synod and the diocesan conference, which shall include an audited financial statement. This report shall be based on circuit reports and be copied to the Bishop, ELCSA committee and ELCSA Women's Desk Officer.
All reports shall embody constructive ideas and suggestions arising from activities of different groups.

11.2.6 Control of funds and property of the league in the diocese. The account books shall be audited by the diocesan ELCSA auditors once a year. Inventory of property shall be sent to the Diocesan Executive Secretary and other church officials concerned annually.

11.2.7 scrutinize all motions to be presented to the ELCSA Women's Conference.

11.2.8 to fill vacancies in any one of the offices.

11.2.9 be responsible for a diocesan women's desk and co-ordinate through its secretary with the ELCSA Women's Desk.

11.2.10 Organize workshops and seminars in order to strengthen the league to undertake projects at all levels.

11.2.11 Decide the budget of the league and make provision for 11.1.9 and 11.2.10 above.

- 11.3.1 The Diocesan conference shall be held once every two years.
- 11.3.2 The composition of the Diocesan conference shall include all members of the diocesan committee, all members of the circuit committees and three delegates elected by the Circuit Conference from each circuit.
- 11.3.3 The Bishop shall be the pastoral advisor of the league in his/her diocese. He/she shall have the right to attend all meetings and conferences in his/her diocese. He/she shall officiate at elections, induct committee members and officially open all meetings and conferences held in his/her diocese.

12. ELCSA COMMITTEE

- 12.1 The Presiding Bishop's wife shall be ex officio chairlady of the league in ELCSA.
- 12.1.2 Other ex officio members shall be all Bishop's wives and the Diocesan secretaries.
- 12.1.3 Elected Office bearers shall be the vice-chairlady, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer. They shall hold office for six years, and can be re-elected.
- 12.1.4 The Office bearers shall be nominated and elected From amongst members of the diocesan committees and delegates attending the conference.
- 12.1.5 Elections shall be done by secret ballot. Voting members shall be all those mentioned under 12.1, 12.1.1, 12.1.2 and 12.1.3.
- 12.1.6 The Women's Desk Officer shall be an ex officio member of the ELCSA Committee without a vote.
- 12.1.7 The ELCSA Committee shall meet once a year and when need arises.
- 12.1.8 The chairlady, vice chairlady, the secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer, shall act as its Executive committee.
- 12.1.9 To form a quorum at least half the number of members including the chairlady, or in her absence the vice chairlady, or in her absence the secretary shall be present.
- 12.1.10 In the event of none of the aforementioned office bearers being present, no meeting shall be held.
- 12.1.11 The conference shall be held biennially.
- 12.1.12 The composition of the ELCSA conference shall include all ELCSA Committee members, diocesan committees, all chairladies of Circuits and three delegates from every diocese of ELCSA, elected at a Diocesan Conference from among its members.

12.2 DUTIES

- 12.2.1 As the chairlady the Presiding Bishop's wife, shall be responsible for the co-ordination, organisation and functioning of the league in ELCSA.
She shall together with her committee:

- 12.2.2 Be responsible for the life and work of the league in ELCSA.
- 12.2.3 Co-ordinate the work in all dioceses of ELCSA.
- 12.2.4 Establish and maintain relationships with organisations outside ELCSA.
- 12.2.5 Report to ELCSA conference. This report shall include audited financial statements and shall be copied to the Presiding Bishop, and all dioceses. A report shall also be submitted to General Assembly.
- 12.2.6 Scrutinize and approve the motions sent by different dioceses.
- 12.2.7 To decide on the budget of the league and make provision for the proper administration of funds in all dioceses.
- 12.2.8 Control of funds and Properties of the league in ELCSA. Financial books of account shall be audited annually.
- 12.2.9 Be responsible for the operation of the ELCSA Women's Desk and co-operation and co-ordination of the Desk with the dioceses.
- 12.2.10 Organize workshops and seminars in order to strengthen the league to undertake projects and programmes at all levels.
- 12.2.11 The committee shall control the inventory of the property and a copy thereof shall be sent to the General Secretary annually.

13. **SUBSCRIPTION**

The ELCSA conference shall decide at its bi-ennial conference on the subscription fees for all its members and how it will be allotted to the various levels.

14. **UNIFORM**

14.1 The official uniform of the league shall be:

14.1.1 Black Blouse: Straight cut with two pockets, set between darts and side seams, black buttons, number according to size, a belt with two buttons, straight collar, long sleeves with cuffs, two darts at the front and at the back.

Collar: White collar, with tipped corners in front, 12cm wide everywhere.

Skirt: Black Skirt

Shoes: Black

Stockings: Black

Cap: White three-piece pattern with brim 6cm all around.

Brooch: The official brooch pinned where the white collar meets.

14.1.2 Un-married women: Where such a group exists their uniform shall be:

Blouse: White, pattern as for Women's league.

Skirt: Black.

Stockings: Charcoal.

Shoes: Black.

- Cap:** White three-piece pattern
- Collar:** Black
- Brooch:** same as for women's league.

14.2 OCCASIONS FOR DONNING UNIFORM

- 14.2.1 On days of prayer meetings.
- 14.2.2 At Holy Communion Services.
- 14.2.3 All Church festivals.
- 14.2.4 At funerals of deceased members of the league, church workers, elders, members of the youth league and the men's league.
- 14.2.5 For Confirmation and Baptism services and when carrying out duties prescribed under par. 3.3.5 and 3.4
- 14.2.6 On occasions of the installation of new members, at induction of church workers, ordination and dedication of new church building, unveiling of tombstone ceremonies.

15. CONFERENCES

- 15.1 Conferences shall be held at Parish, Circuit, Diocesan and Church levels as provide for in this constitution and shall have the power to:
 - 15.1.1 receive reports on activities.
 - 15.1.2 receive audited financial statements and decide on the budget.
 - 15.1.3 Elect its committee and fill vacancies on such committees.
 - 15.1.4 Appoint recording, resolutions, and conference message committees for the conference.
 - 15.1.5 Set broad policy for the relevant level of the League. Also observers to sit in and receive official guests.
 - 15.1.6 **MOTIONS:**
At conference a resolutions committee shall be elected to scrutinize all motions to be presented to the conference.

16. PROCEDURES

16.1 VACANCIES:

- 16.1.1 Should a vacancy occur in the office of the chairlady or the secretary, the respective deputy and assistant shall act.
- 16.1.2 In case of any other official, the committee shall cause the vacancy to be filled.

16.1.3 All outgoing committees shall function until the first meeting called at the instance of the incoming committee.

16.2 ELECTIONS

Nominations and elections shall be done by secret ballot at conference, by voting members according to the relevant paragraphs.

16.3 VOTING

16.3.1 Voting shall be open to all the delegates and committee members.

16.3.2 Except for elections and amendments to this Constitution, committees and conferences shall strive to take consensus decisions. Where this is not possible, decisions shall be taken by simple majority vote. The Chairlady shall have a casting vote.

16.3.3 **RESOLUTIONS:** Resolutions shall be carried by simple majority.

17. AMENDMENTS AND ALTERATIONS OF CONSTITUTION

17.1 The constitution shall be subject to alterations from time to time. Amendments may be suggested at any level and must be acted upon by the next higher level. Proposed amendments shall be passed by ELCSA conference on a two-thirds majority vote of those present at the conference.

17.2 Changes in the constitution shall be published After discussion and approval of the alteration by ELCSA Church Council and when the committee is instructed to do so by the conference. CC may refer amendment proposals back for further deliberations.

17.3 Proposed changes shall be specific in stating the clause and paragraph referred to for amendment.

18. DISSOLUTION

Should for any reason the league be dissolved, all property and funds shall remain the property and funds of ELCSA.

This Constitution of the ELCSA Prayer Women's league was amended at the 1998 Conference held at Rustenburg, and approved by the ELCSA Church Council at its 91 sitting.