



Report on Justice for Women

Introduction

Churchwide Organization Responsibility

The 2003 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America endorsed the Plan for Mission for the churchwide organization. This plan includes five strategic directions of the churchwide organization, each of which will be successful, it is noted, when the churchwide organization pursues and lives out four commitments (see the introduction to the “Planning for Mission” Web site at www.elca.org/planning/introduction.html). Included in these four commitments is the commitment to “[c]onfront the scandalous realities of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual, physical, personal, and class barriers that often manifest themselves in exclusion, poverty, hunger, and violence” (Strategic Directions of the Churchwide Organization). In other words, the churchwide organization bears the responsibility to fulfill the strategic directions while simultaneously fulfilling the organizational commitment to confront sexism and to support justice for women.

The 2005 Churchwide Assembly endorsed a proposal to restructure the churchwide organization in accordance with the churchwide organization’s strategic plan. The first goal of restructuring reads:

The churchwide organization is restructuring its ministries so that they are directly aligned with the Plan for Mission endorsed by the 2003 Churchwide Assembly. These restructuring efforts are specifically designed to integrate and more clearly focus many of the functions of the churchwide organization (*Faithful Yet Changing*, “Goals of Restructuring,” p. 5).

The fourth goal of restructuring is to further the work of justice for women in church and in society through the position for justice for women in the Church in Society unit. In part, the goal pertaining to justice for women reads, “Sexism in the church must be eradicated” (*Faithful Yet Changing*, p. 6).

One goal of the restructuring was to increase accountability across all units, sections, and offices for implementing the four commitments in the Plan for Mission. The proposal to restructure laid out a vision of accountability for the organization. It reads in full:

Accountability to and compliance with the policies of this church adopted by a Churchwide Assembly or the Church Council, especially the four commitments for implementation in the Plan for Mission, is the work of the entire churchwide organization. The executive directors of churchwide units will hold staff accountable for consistently striving toward the fulfillment of these commitments. The presiding bishop provides supervision of all executive directors and will include this area of evaluation in all performance reviews.

A recurring question is how the churchwide organization itself will be held responsible for its compliance with these commitments and policies. An organization-wide system of

admonition and affirmation is necessary; therefore, this proposal requests that the ELCA Church Council through its Planning and Evaluation Committee, working with the Executive for Administration, evaluate annually and report biennially to the Churchwide Assembly on the ways in which the churchwide organization has advanced the vision of the four commitments and other policies or has failed to do so. Each unit’s director will provide a report to the Executive for Administration as requested on the unit’s successes and failures pertaining to the commitments and policies. Upon receipt of the annual report, the Church Council will identify concrete steps it expects the churchwide organization to take in the future.

The policies and commitments adopted by the Churchwide Assembly and Church Council belong to this whole church. It is hoped that synods, congregations, institutions, and agencies of this church will take up the challenge of finding similar ways to examine accountability to and compliance with these policies and commitments (*Faithful Yet Changing*, p. 7).

Churchwide Organization Work

As the above documentation makes evident, the new structure of the churchwide organization places the responsibility and accountability for gender justice throughout the whole of the churchwide organization. Since 2005 churchwide staff has been working hard to accomplish what is a significant shift in how we live out this important commitment. Together staff members are engaged in a constant and evolving conversation about how gender justice relates to and permeates all of the work that we do. The following are primary examples of ways in which justice for women is the ministry and commitment of programs, units, and offices of the churchwide organization.

Vocation and Education

The Vocation and Education (VE) unit’s goals are to assist this church in loving service to God’s world through claiming vocation, nurturing networks, and equipping leaders. In the area of justice for women, these goals are being lived out and addressed by this unit in a number of ways.

Claiming Vocation: The unit is currently engaged in surfacing the critical cultural and theological issues surrounding women, leadership, and the Church and joining with others to consider the progress, problems, and potential as women and men work together to claim vocation. For our seminaries, colleges, and universities, data is collected on women’s participation as board members, faculty members, administrators, and students, and is used in our advocacy. Colleges and universities select their own governing boards through various systems, but churchwide staff has opportunity to advocate strongly for the election of women. Vocation and Education staff can and do advocate for and

facilitate the full participation of women in ELCA seminary faculties, governance boards, and administration, including the office of the president. Staff members join others in advocacy for the consideration of women by search committees to serve as seminary, college, and university presidents. In this past academic year, one institution elected a woman to be president.

Support and advocacy for early childhood education centers and schools means that the churchwide organization supports and advocates for ministries in which women provide much of the leadership. This support includes the provision of compensation guidelines that encourage fair and professional salary and benefits packages for teachers, most of whom are women in historically underpaid positions.

Women are given full consideration for the Phoebe Herman, Rossing, and Torrison Grants Program, which respectively are scholarships for students at ELCA colleges and universities who have particular financial needs, who are majoring in physics, and who have been admitted to a medical school. Women in advanced theological studies are given full consideration for grants from the ELCA Educational Grant Program. The ELCA seeks a balance of leadership by gender in the Association of Teaching Theologians. Enrollment at ELCA seminaries is tracked by gender. Since 2000, there has been parity between women and men in Master of Divinity programs. The editor of *Lutheran Partners* magazine works to ensure that writers reflect the full diversity of this church's leadership. The magazine has published special articles to mark anniversaries of women's ordination.

Nurturing Networks: The Vocation and Education unit seeks to nurture existing networks across the church in many ways. As this unit takes up the work related to justice for women in the area of women in ministry, VE surveys the landscape for key leaders, networks, newsletters, programs and gatherings, gives voice to women in ministry, supports women's leadership, and promotes collegiality between women and men. The unit is considering next steps in the ways these networks can be strengthened and partnerships can be formed in support for women in ministry. Support is being provided for women theologians who participate in the group Lutheran Women in Theological and Religious Studies which meets annually in conjunction with professional meetings. Other gatherings for women in leadership include an opportunity for young women in first calls in conjunction with an event concurrent to this Churchwide Assembly. On the horizon are plans for a gathering of women of color serving in rostered ministries.

Equipping Leaders: This unit equips and develops leaders to respond to the needs of God's world. For instance, VE has supported a young woman adult leader's participation in an international women's conference focusing on young women's leadership in the HIV-AIDS crisis and the ways women understand and work for gender justice globally. Her participation is contingent upon her agreement to share her experiences with the wider church upon her return.

The commitment of this church to prevent sexual misconduct by its leaders is fully articulated within the work of VE. This unit provides assistance to synodical bishops and their staff on individual cases of misconduct. It offers training to synodical staff and response teams as requested. Resources are developed, identified and made available for use in synods, congregations, seminaries and other arenas.

In the special project to study exemplary first-call congregations ("The Vocation of First-Call Congregations"), VE staff members are talking with congregations about their decisions to call a woman as pastor and how this process unfolded, whether there were concerns or disagreements about issuing a call and how the congregation dealt with these questions. This aspect of the project may be revealing since many of the congregations in the study have had (or presently have) a woman as pastor.

Concern for women who are serving on congregational staffs and as senior pastors has shaped major annual events for leadership training of pastors serving in staff situations. Publicity in 2006 was sent to all congregations that listed a woman's name first among the pastors, encouraging them to attend. At both the ministry staff event (for assistant or associate pastors) and the head of staff event (for senior or lead pastors) lunch and discussion groups for women were facilitated throughout.

Global Mission

The Global Mission unit lives out a commitment to women in all aspects of its work, in accordance with policy and procedures the unit adopted in 2001 (www.elca.org/globalmission/policy/women.html). This commitment is expressed through planning, budgeting, implementation, and church-to-church and ecumenical relationships. In all aspects of its programming and in conversations with companion churches, Global Mission encourages the participation and leadership of women in shaping common activities.

It is difficult to quantify the full extent of this commitment, since it is interwoven throughout Global Mission's activities—from choices about who speaks at Global Mission events to staffing choices to decisions on specific grants. The Global Mission unit's budget, however, includes over \$572,000 in grants to programs and projects with a *specific focus* on the empowerment of women, in cooperation with companion churches and agencies. Such programs range from gender equity education in Argentina to mother-daughter literacy in Kenya to a health and development project for tribal women in India. In addition, many other Global Mission funded programs and projects assist and empower women. For example, this unit works with The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Lutheran World Relief (LWR) to provide emergency aid and encourage sustainable development. Both LWF and LWR have an explicit commitment to gender equity that is reflected in the programs and activities in which they engage.

In addition, through its international scholarship program, the ELCA, through its Global Mission unit, has supported 760 students since 1988, of whom 212 have been women. In the ELCA's early years, most students were men and many of the women who did participate studied in non-degree programs. Currently, at least half of the new students each year are women, most in masters- or doctoral-level programs. During this period, the ELCA engaged in consistent communication with companion churches, expressing both the value it places on the participation of women and its ongoing commitment to assist women to attain the level of education needed to pursue advanced studies. The result of this effort can be seen in women who received ELCA scholarships being among the first to be ordained in their churches, then assuming church leadership positions and serving

as teaching theologians in their churches' seminaries and institutions.

Multicultural Ministries

The director for Latino ministries is the project director of a two-year project that is funded in partnership with Thrivent Financial for Lutherans titled "Equipping Latina Leaders for Challenges of Our 21st Century Church."

This project provides mentorship and creates contextualized training to Latina lay and clergy leaders from Region 7 within the ELCA. Latina lay and clergy project participants are learning to better support each other's ministries. An anticipated outcome of the project will be the creation of a regional Latina Lutheran mentoring network that will serve as a model for a national network.

The Multicultural Ministries unit, the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations section, the Church in Society unit, and Women of the ELCA together are supporting a project to take women from the ELCA, including young women, to Washington, D.C., to meet with women from historic Black churches for advocacy training related to hunger concerns.

Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission

As a new unit created in the churchwide organization restructuring, the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission (EOCM) unit carried out a salary study in 2006 to ensure salary equity among its staff. This study resulted in salary adjustments within this unit for several exempt and non-exempt staff positions. In hiring and staffing procedures, this unit actively searches for women mission developers and redevelopers, as well as searching for women candidates for mission directors and stewardship staff. In addition, EOCM has initiated a process on this church's "Policy on Sexual Harassment and Misconduct" with new-start congregations, synodically authorized worshipping communities, and developing congregations.

Development Services

One way in which the Development Services (DS) unit contributes to the realization of justice for women is through practices of socially responsible investing, which includes prohibiting investment in pornography-related entities and positive investment in programs that support small business development around the world. Development Services contributes to women's leadership in this church through The Fund for Leaders in Mission advertisements and marketing resources, which highlight full participation of women and ethnic communities in church leadership. A number of gift planners are developing strategies and forums that address women as managers of their own finances.

Information Technology

The Information Technology section of the Office of the Treasurer strives to keep a balance of women and men in its staff.

Office of the Secretary

The Office of the Secretary carries responsibility for the implementation of this church's representational principles:

Except as otherwise provided in this constitution and bylaws, the churchwide organization, through the

Church Council, shall establish processes that will ensure that at least 60 percent of the members of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, and other organizational units shall be laypersons; that as nearly as possible, 50 percent of the lay members of these assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be female and 50 percent shall be male, and that, where possible, the representation of ordained ministers shall be both female and male. At least 10 percent of the members of these assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English (ELCA 5.01.f).

The Office of the Secretary carries out this responsibility primarily through its work with the Nominating Committee of the Churchwide Assembly and the nomination process of the Church Council (ELCA 13.41.05.) as well as through its management of the assembly, including voting members (ELCA 13.41.02.h.). It keeps careful record of nominations and elections, taking care that the representational principles are fulfilled when vacancies occur.

It solicits nominations in various categories throughout this church and then works with the Nominating Committee to build slates for elections at the Churchwide Assembly.

The Office of the Secretary works with the Executive Committee of the Church Council, which serves as the nominations committee for elections under the jurisdiction of the council.

This office maintains a database of those nominated, including those not elected, so that potential nominees can be slated, with their permission, in future elections. Staff members of this office also track voting members to the Churchwide Assembly elected by synods and their replacements so that elected voting members are replaced by a person in the same representational category insofar as possible.

In addition, through its oversight of synodical constitutions, the Office of the Secretary monitors synodical commitments to the same representational principles (ELCA 5.01.g.).

The commitment of the Office of the Secretary to justice for women also is evident in the collections of the library and archives as well as exhibits based on those holdings, such as "It Didn't All Begin with Ordination: Women's Contributions to ELCA History."

Communication Services

Justice for women permeates the Communication Services unit's work and is reflected in all media employed by the unit in its communication work. This includes video, print, Internet, photography, the spoken word, television and radio, news, and advertising.

Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop is committed to creating equal opportunity for women within the churchwide organization. Through the hiring process, as applications are reviewed for open positions, HR ensures that a pool of diverse candidates is available to the hiring units and sections, and works closely with them to select a

diverse team of interviewers. The section also works closely with unit and section executives to ensure that all employees are being compensated equitably and that fair-employment policies and practices are understood and implemented. Salary equity is taken into consideration when new employees are hired, and current employees' salaries are reviewed at least annually to identify any inequities that may be present. Personnel policies and practices are developed and implemented to afford equal opportunity in all aspects of the employment relationship, including hiring, compensation, promotion, demotion, transfer, layoffs, discharges, and benefits. This section ensures that employees who have supervisory responsibilities have a thorough knowledge and understanding of all policies, including those dealing with equal employment opportunity and harassment.

Worship and Liturgical Resources

The Worship and Liturgical Resources (WP) section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop carries out ongoing work on issues related to language in worship, taking seriously the tensions between the way language can marginalize and the still-unsettled arguments among faithful people about particular texts and language usage in worship. The section is committed to expanding the treasury of language and images in order to proclaim the fullness of the triune God.

In very practical ways the section supports women's leadership in this church's worship. Staff members identify and recruit worship leaders for churchwide events that reflect the diversity of this church, including gender diversity. The section seeks gender balance in working groups to develop worship resources, plan churchwide worship, and complement the availability of worship staff for making presentations related to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The section attends to issues related to justice for women when reviewing liturgical materials for other units and partners in ministry. This same attention is given when facilitating the review of materials we develop.

The section also encourages and recruits women when filling positions on the worship staff.

Management Services

The Management Services (MS) section of the Office of the Treasurer provides support for nursing mothers by providing a clean, private lactation room in the building. This support is for both staff and visitors.

Office of the Presiding Bishop

The public voice of the presiding bishop in verbal and written statements regularly addresses issues of justice for women directly or implicitly. Examples in 2006 include the presiding bishop's statement on the Life of Coretta Scott King and the Joint Pastoral Letter with The Episcopal Church on Global Poverty and the Millennium Development Goals.

The executive for administration oversees the churchwide organization's work on the Plan for Mission, including the plan's four commitments for implementation. Staff alliances have been organized around four critical areas of ministry lifted up in the commitments for implementation. These areas are multicultural ministry, young adult ministry, poverty and wealth, and justice for women. The executive for administration regularly convenes

the alliance leaders and their respective executive directors, appoints alliance members from each unit, section, and office of the churchwide organization, and works with the Planning and Evaluation Committee of the Church Council to ensure the implementation of the four commitments in the Plan for Mission.

The director for leadership development in the Office of the Presiding Bishop administers a leadership development grant program. More than \$2 million in project grants was allocated to support a variety of new leadership initiatives. Although the projects do not specifically focus on women as leaders, all the projects include women.

Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations

The Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations (ER) section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop works to create equal opportunity for women of all cultures and to foster partnership between women and men by inviting women to participate in the ER seminary intern program and by intentionally making appointments of women to ecumenical dialogues, delegations, and committees. For example, at least one woman represents this church on every bilateral dialogue team and full communion coordinating committee co-sponsored by this church. Several women, clergy and lay, participated in the spring 2006 ecumenical journey to Geneva, Istanbul, Rome, and London. In addition, two of the four ELCA members serving as this church's representatives to the Council of the Lutheran World Federation are women, and several women have served as delegates to the World Council of Churches Assembly and to the General Assembly of the National Council of the Churches of Christ. However, the just inclusion of women at ecumenical tables remains a challenge for this church and for the ecumenical movement as a whole.

Synodical Relations

The Synodical Relations (SR) section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop provided travel assistance to four female bishops in the form of a \$500 grant in 2007 in support of their attendance at the Lutheran World Federation Conference of Women Bishops, Presidents, and Leaders, held in May 2007.

At this time, there are eight female synodical bishops in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The section provides ongoing support to female bishops in their ministries.

Research and Evaluation

The Research and Evaluation (RE) section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop was part of two projects designed to support justice for women in the ELCA. Each of the projects resulted in a report. The first was the 35th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women, Rostered Leader Survey 2005, completed in September 2006. The second was the Summary of Interviews on Justice for Women in the ELCA, completed in December 2006.

The Lutheran Magazine

Attentiveness to the ministry of justice for women is built into the way that the editorial staff of *The Lutheran* magazine plans and communicates. When *The Lutheran* plans and evaluates magazine pages, staff members ensure that women and men are equally visible in images and in authoritative sources.

On a broader scale, *The Lutheran* promotes greater justice for both women and men in this church and in the world. For example, for many years articles have covered global stories of struggle and hope, including stories about women. In order to keep issues of gender justice central to readers' attention, for example, *The Lutheran* continues to cover clergy sexual abuse. *The Lutheran* also lifts up images of men and women in diverse roles and vocations. For example, the May 2007 issue of the magazine has on its cover a father holding his son, with the caption: "Tending our children's souls." On the inside is that same family and others: a mother lighting a candle with her son, and a father reading to his son. *The Lutheran* is also sensitive to inclusive language and the staff strives to use inclusive language.

Church in Society

In addition to the specific work of justice for women assigned to the Church in Society (CS) unit, this unit works in multiple ways to enable this church to realize the full participation of women; to create equal opportunity for women of all cultures; to foster partnership between men and women; to address sexism; and to advocate justice for women in this church and society.

The ELCA Washington Office closely watches U.S. policies and great effort is given to the protection of programs vital to women. Nationally, for example, the Washington Office works to protect food stamps and other poverty-related entitlement programs. Internationally, the Washington Office works to affect legislation that benefits women in developing countries in particular, such as through increasing U.S. appropriations for poverty focused development aid, which includes family planning funding, HIV-AIDS relief and prevention, and the U.N.'s Millennium Development Goals, all of which affect women.

As a means of deepening connections with the Women of the ELCA and Lutheran women throughout the country and expanding the number of women actively participating in ELCA advocacy activities, the ELCA Washington Office, together with the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations section, the Multicultural Ministries unit, and Women of the ELCA, initiated a project to encourage Lutheran representation at a women's pre-conference to the June 9, 2007, Bread for the World hunger gathering in Washington, D.C. During this event Lutheran women joined with women from historic Black churches in joint advocacy training. Working in conjunction with Women of the ELCA, the Washington Office invited Women of the ELCA synodical presidents to participate in this event. In addition, the Washington Office invited all eight female bishops and all female bishops' assistants and distributed invitations to the directors of the state public policy offices. Each invitation included a link to a bulletin insert about the pre-conference and a request that the women who received invitations share information about this gathering with other women in their congregations and communities. Bishop Andrea F. DeGroot-Nesdahl participated in this event. It was anticipated that this gathering would help lay the foundation for future efforts to engage women in advocacy.

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program works for justice for women in a variety of ways. CSR has worked to put pressure on international hotel chains to conform to a code of conduct intended to curb trafficking in children for sex at international hotel chains. Most hotel chains have been

receptive to the idea of developing an internal policy to address the issue of trafficking by training their employees in responding to suspected cases of human trafficking or sexual exploitation. In addition, CSR has had talks with one personal-care products manufacturer which is offering grants addressing commercial sexual exploitation and human trafficking. In the last round of grants, two CSR partners received grants.

The CSR program looks at the representation of women on boards of directors of corporations and at "the glass ceiling" in corporations. CSR has filed annual resolutions with corporations with all-male board leadership asking them to expand their pool of board candidates. Likewise, the work of the Advisory Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility (ACCSR) helps to inform this work. Committee composition addresses the issue of gender balance through at-large membership appointments.

Women in Africa are disproportionately suffering from HIV-AIDS. The CSR program addresses transnational corporations working in sub-Saharan Africa around issues of providing needed pharmaceuticals to their employees and addressing workplace issues around the problem. In addition CSR has worked closely with the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance based in Geneva addressing pharmaceutical companies around justice issues surrounding HIV.

Access to capital in this country is an issue that affects women, especially minority women. CSR continues to address sub-prime lending and predatory practices with the major financial institutions of this country. Reports are annually reviewed with the banks concerning their loan records in this arena.

Work has begun in the past year around the issue of environmental health. Women have a disproportionate exposure due to both pregnancy issues and gender-based issues. CSR works closely with Women's Voices for the Earth, the Breast Cancer Fund, and the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics in addressing environmental health.

The Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC) maintains a significant focus on issues relating to women's human rights across the United Nations agenda, relating but not limited to: women's participation in decision-making, HIV-AIDS, poverty and development, and peace and security.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): Dating back to the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, LOWC coordinates delegations of women and men named by the Lutheran World Federation to the annual Commission on the Status of Women, which considers the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action every March. The theme of the commission changes every year; the theme for 2007 is financing for gender equality. Past themes have included a focus on girls, the role of men and boys, and women's role in post-conflict reconstruction, for example. LOWC focuses on the themes in order to prepare visiting delegates and aims to relate the issues to the global and national church institutions. LOWC regularly plans public "side events" at the CSW to showcase the work of ecumenical organizations, as well as hosting a dialogue for young people about the theme. In order to facilitate the work of delegates, LOWC remains in close contact with the women's desk of the Lutheran World Federation in Geneva, and maintains contact with previous LWF delegates to share resources with them.

Ecumenical cooperation around women's rights: In recent years LOWC has taken a leadership role by chairing the coalition Ecumenical Women, which evolved as a supportive religious voice for justice for women rather than one opposed to measures such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Ecumenical Women coalition aims: to work within faith traditions to raise the status of women and human rights; to promote dialogue between the U.N. and faith communities; to bring a perspective of liberation and justice for women to the U.N.; and to collaborate with other non-governmental organizations and organizations in the international community. This year, the coalition hosted a preparatory training for 70 women from around the world, coordinated dinners throughout the two-week meeting for fellowship and strategizing, held daily worship services, authored a devotional, and sponsored an interfaith panel on using religious texts for empowerment. The coalition is currently redeveloping its Web site to include resources on feminist theology and human rights, regional contact information, and worship resources.

Sharing resources about women's rights: LOWC has furthered its outreach and communication to international partners and member churches by creating a periodic "LOWC Update" about U.N.-related news, events, and resources sent out over e-mail. This update always includes resources related to justice for women.

Monitoring and reporting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): The office continues its collaboration with the LWF Office of International Affairs and Human Rights, monitoring several U.N. treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In coordination with the Geneva office, LOWC contacts LWF member churches and World Service field offices in those countries that soon will be reviewed by one of the treaty bodies. The reports received are then shared with the committee experts for the preparation of questions to be posed to government representatives. LOWC has facilitated shadow reports on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Venezuela, and the Czech Republic, and the public presence of a delegation from LWF Mauritania. In collaboration with the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in the Netherlands, LOWC also provided technical support to an ecumenical partner, the Justice and Peace Commission of Pakistan, and planned a public event showcasing the work of faith-based groups monitoring CEDAW in Syria, Mauritania, and Pakistan.

Women, Peace, and Security, Security Council Resolution 1325: Agreed on in 2001, Security Council resolution 1325 on "women, peace, and security" requires further advocacy from non-governmental organizations to ensure that governments include women in decision-making in peace building, as well as protect women during and after conflict. LOWC follows the progress of 1325's implementation and is aware of how the resolution is at work in national contexts as well as of the further advocacy and education necessary for it to be fully implemented.

Women in Development: As part of LOWC's work following the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs), this office remains vigilant that development programs and policy have women's leadership and empowerment at the center. Most of the MDGs have gender equality at their core, whether related to secondary education for girls, maternal or child mortality, access to water, or uplifting 1.2 billion people from poverty, the majority of which

are women. In 2007, LOWC will focus on financing for women and development, in partnership with Ecumenical Women, through surveying our partners on the ground about best practices and challenges. We will also develop an ecumenical theological statement on this issue for the Commission on the Status of Women 2007.

The ELCA World Hunger Program supports multiple efforts to promote gender equality. Justice for women is one of the key priorities of the World Hunger Program since we know that when women have access to food, and participate in the systems that ensure access to food, families and communities also are supported. In addressing the priorities of the hunger program through international grants, domestic grants, advocacy, and education, the World Hunger program funds, initiates, and implements programming at the intersections of justice for women and the root causes and solutions of hunger and poverty. For example, the new hunger resource, "Sustaining Simplicity: A Journal," guides readers through one year of the life of a single mother living in an urban setting. In her struggles with a just and simple lifestyle the author, Chicago poet Anne Basye, exemplifies the struggles all women make in their attempts to follow Christ's commands. The primary audience for the resource is women, who make most major economic decisions in most families.

The poverty ministries program is infused with gender and race analyses in written materials, training, and program oversight. Through its grants program, leadership development, and education and advocacy, poverty ministries works for justice for women. For example, poverty ministries supports programs working with women with HIV-AIDS, particularly women of color. Several HIV-AIDS programs were funded this year through the domestic hunger grants program. And the ELCA AIDS Web site has a section on women and AIDS.

Poverty ministries sponsors an annual leadership development workshop, the Diakonia Institute, which raises up leaders from low-income communities and provides training for them. The majority of these participants are women who are serving other women in their communities.

Through its community organizing, poverty ministries is working to establish a micro-credit loan program in California for women to pursue business ventures. Poverty ministries is also involved in Lutheran Advocates for Safe Families, a network of individuals, agencies, organizations, and congregations working to end domestic violence and child abuse.

The development of leaders, both women and men, is at the heart of congregation-based organizing (CBO). In ELCA congregations, CBO has been defined as the intentional and disciplined gathering of diverse peoples of a community into relationships across all racial, economic, religious, gender, political, and neighborhood lines for the purpose of making that community "work better" for the good of all. In the ELCA this means ordinary people of faith living out their baptismal calling to engage fully a God-given public life with other people of good will. More than half of all congregational leaders trained in the arts of organizing are women. CBO teaches that every person has a God-given capacity to be in relationship around his or her own interests and can act with power, in relationships with others, around deeply held values. Finding one's own voice and boldly acting with others publicly around shared interests and values is an invitation to power in a deeply relational form. Throughout the country thousands of congregations and hundreds of thousands of leaders are finding their voices and participating in bold public life

through CBO, including nearly 500 ELCA congregations. Through the Ministry Among People in Poverty “leadership development for public engagement” initiative, 18 training events in the arts of organizing will be conducted for synods and congregational leaders in 2007-2008.

The social ministry organizations program oversees Lutheran Services in America, which serves women and girls of all ages through direct services. Serving one in 50 residents of the United States, Lutheran Services in America member organizations have an enormous influence and effect on the health and well-being of scores of women and girls. These social ministry organizations are largely staffed by women, and the director of the social ministry organizations program in CS works in tandem with others to ensure fair and equal compensation.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) intentionally hired case workers to reflect the gender and ethnic diversity of its clients. Lutheran Disaster Response was named a member of the consortium of organizations called “Katrina Aid Today” to provide case management services for persons affected by Hurricane Katrina. This program was funded by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) from funds given to the United States by foreign governments. Case management in disaster response is a service in which clients affected by disaster have an opportunity to meet with a case manager who helps navigate the often complicated array of programs and services available. Lutheran Disaster Response has a long track record of providing these services in disaster. Historically, women reach out for case management services following disaster at a higher rate than men. In order to provide case managers in this program with whom clients would feel most comfortable, LDR performed intentional hiring to reflect the gender and ethnic diversity of the clients affected by Hurricane Katrina. The results of this intentional hiring were that, of the 156 case managers hired through this program, 81 percent are women and 70 percent are people of color.

Such a response is reflective of the Church World Service Emergency Response Program, which details newly adopted standards for LDR. According to these principles, “women and men from the disaster-affected populations are included in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of response programs.” Whenever significant issues for women result from a disaster, local women are included in all aspects of disaster response planning.

Additionally, Lutheran Disaster Response performs its ministry in disaster through partnerships with Lutheran social ministry organizations. These organizations appoint coordinators who generally work on a state-wide level responding to disasters in the service area of the social ministry organization. There are 44 persons who function as Lutheran Disaster Response coordinators around the country; of these, 23 (52%) are women.

Also in the Church in Society unit, the studies program has produced social statements and messages that relate directly and indirectly to justice for women, including social statements on abortion; economic life; the environment; health and healthcare; peace; and race, ethnicity, and culture, as well as messages on AIDS; commercial sexual exploitation; community violence; end-of-life decisions; homelessness; immigration; the Israel-Palestinian conflict; sexuality; and suicide prevention. The studies program also seeks gender balance on task forces related to its work. The editor of *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* seeks a feminist perspective on most social issues addressed in its issues.

Church in Society—Justice for Women Program

The work of justice for women in church and society is assigned to the Church in Society program unit. The applicable continuing resolution (16.12.D05.) reads, in part:

The Church in Society unit shall assist this church to discern, understand, and respond to the needs of human beings, communities, society, and the whole creation through direct human services and through addressing systems, structures, and policies of society, seeking to promote justice, peace, and the care of the earth. To fulfill these responsibilities, this program unit shall: . . .

d. work to enable this church to realize the full participation of women; to create equal opportunity for women of all cultures; to foster partnership between men and women; to assist this church to address sexism; and to advocate justice for women in this church and society. In so doing, this program unit shall:

- 1) present a program plan annually to the Church Council and biennially to the Churchwide Assembly on these efforts; and*
- 2) convene a consulting committee related to this task.*

The program for justice for women falls under all of the strategic directions of the churchwide organization’s Plan for Mission and most specifically assists in implementing the organization’s guidance to be a public church, to cultivate strong ecumenical and interfaith relationships, and to assist in leadership development across the church. Even more specifically, the justice for women program represents this church’s organizational commitment to “confront the scandalous realities of racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, age, gender, familial, sexual, physical, personal, and class barriers that often manifest themselves in exclusion, poverty, hunger, and violence.”

A. Consulting Committee

The justice for women consulting committee is called for in the continuing resolutions of the ELCA constitution (2005). It serves as a resource for advice and discussion on the program plan for justice for women, focusing on ideas, themes, and issues related to the work of justice for women in church and society. The committee is comprised of six at-large ELCA members who were nominated by various leaders in the church, as well as representatives from several churchwide units. The consulting committee currently includes: the Rev. Charles S. Miller, executive for administration in the Office of the Presiding Bishop; the Rev. David A. Donges, bishop of the South Carolina Synod; Ms. Linda Post Bushkovsky, executive director of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Ms. Jessica M. McKee, member of the Church Council; Ms. Joyce Schoulte, member of the program committee for Church in Society; the Rev. Susan Candea of Loveland, Colorado, congregational pastor; Ms. Antonia Clemente of Brooklyn, New York, community and social worker; Ms. Kristen Kvam of Prairie Village, Kansas, professor of systematic theology; Ms. Agnes S. McClain of Los Angeles, California, assistant to the synodical bishop and community organizer; Ms. Mikka McCracken of Bemidji, Minnesota, student and former leader in the Lutheran Youth Organization; and Ms. Jaime Weller-Lafavor of Las Vegas, Nevada, executive director of a social ministry organization. *Ex-officio* members are the Rev. Rebecca S. Larson, executive director for Church in Society, and Ms. Mary J. Streufert, director for justice for women in church and society. Ms. Juli Bey, justice for women administrative assistant, serves as secretary and administrative assistant to the committee. The membership of the committee represents a wide range of work

and life experience, geographical location, ethnic communities, and age.

The committee has met twice to review and clarify its role and function. It has conducted a programmatic analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, on the basis of which it has worked with the director for justice for women to develop the program priorities for this church's work on justice for women. These priorities are highlighted in the "Invitation to Action" found below. The committee has also begun to identify key programmatic activities. One of these is to call for an ELCA social statement on gender justice, reflecting the profound recognition that the primary response of this church to gender justice is theological. In addition, the committee evaluated the merit of pursuing broader and deeper research on gender justice in this church; the concept of leadership and the ways in which women and men could be served by leadership development; and the content, images, and format of the justice for women Web site, for example. The committee will convene twice a year; the next meeting is in September 2007.

B. Justice for Women Strategic Alliance

The 2005 Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America voted [CA05.04.09], in part, that "[t]he important work of the Commission [for Women] will now be the responsibility of the interunit alliance and be coordinated by the director for justice for women." As the most concrete expression of how this foundational commitment to gender justice is interacting with and supporting the work of all of the units, the justice for women alliance is one of four alliances called for in the new structure and is responsible to the Cabinet of Executives. The alliances grow from the Plan for Mission's commitments for implementation and are intended to assist the churchwide organization in expressing and deepening those commitments. The Office of the Presiding Bishop regularly convenes the chairs of all of the alliances to review and monitor the work of the alliances. Although full responsibility for the programmatic function of justice for women resides with the Church in Society program unit, the justice for women strategic alliance carries the responsibility to inventory, imagine, and discuss sexism in order to offer advice and assistance to units, sections, and offices. Comprised of churchwide staff members appointed by the directors, each of whom represents a unit, section, or office, the alliance focuses upon challenging the culture of sexism so as to create change throughout the organization. In order to lead the churchwide organization in cultural change away from sexism, the work of the alliance seeks:

- to draw members into thoughtful analysis and reflection upon matters of justice for women in Church and in society;
- to create an atmosphere of trust and integrity in which to discuss matters of gender justice in this church;
- to promote greater abilities to identify sexist habits and beliefs;
- to afford members basic theological foundations for gender justice; and
- to determine program- and unit-specific means of accountability.

Models of shared leading, open discussion, and mutual discernment are the basis of the justice for women alliance.

Members of the justice for women interunit strategic alliance include the following: the Rev. Charles S. Miller, Office of the

Presiding Bishop; Ms. Eileen Heffner, Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations; Ms. Barbara Whalen, Human Resources; Ms. Rebecca Sims, Research and Evaluation; Ms. Marcia Johnson, Synodical Relations; the Rev. Michael L. Burk, Worship and Liturgical Resources; Ms. Deborah K. Myers, Office of the Secretary; Mr. John Temmerman, Office of the Treasurer; Ms. LaRue R. Unglaube, Information Technology; Ms. Jewel Berg, Management Services; Ms. Gloria Bengtson, Augsburg Fortress, Publishers; Ms. Mary J. Streufert, Church in Society; Ms. Kathryn I. Love, Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission; the Rev. Barbara J. Lund, Global Mission; the Rev. Raquel E. Rodriguez, Global Mission; Ms. Christine May, Multicultural Ministries; the Rev. Kim L. Beckmann, Vocation and Education; Mr. Paul D. Edison-Swift, Communication Services; the Rev. Dawn D. Hansen, Women of the ELCA; Ms. Sonia C. Solomonson, *The Lutheran* magazine; Ms. Laura L. Knitt, Foundation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and Ms. Joy Sourou, Mission Investment Fund.

The justice for women alliance meets monthly and works to infuse the work of justice for women into the respective work of each unit, section, and office. In fall 2006 members of the alliance acquainted themselves with the role and function of the strategic alliances within the churchwide organization and held preliminary discussions on biblical and theological understandings of justice. In the winter and spring of 2007 members of the alliance continued biblical and theological discussions centered on sexism, justice and cultural change. In the spring of 2007, the alliance members committed themselves to evaluating churchwide organizational practices and policies by asking, "Which policies and practices are a hindrance to justice for women?" and "Which policies and practices promote or benefit justice for women?" Concurrently, as the convener of the strategic alliance, the director for justice for women is leading the alliance to understand itself as a model for units, sections, and offices throughout the churchwide organization in learning to have difficult conversations addressing sexism.

As stated in the Plan for Mission, the ELCA is committed to addressing sexism and other forms of institutional oppression. Insofar as this is the case, then every person's work of programmatic or administrative ministry within the churchwide organization's structure is affected positively when she or he is able to redress sexism not only in specific policies or habits of the churchwide organization, but also in personal worldview and practice.

C. Program and Priorities

Education

- Justice for women consulting committee: See above.
- Justice for women strategic alliance: See above.
- Justice for women Web site: The justice for women Web site is a critical educational tool of the justice for women program. As such, it continues to develop with the input of key collaborators in the work of the program.
- Relationships: Education is successful when people have secure and responsive relationships. Therefore, the director for justice for women convenes tables and builds relationships within and outside of the ELCA churchwide organization to build support addressing the scandalous realities of systemic oppression, to further program work for justice for women, and to enhance reciprocal learning and renewed ministry.

- **Research and Reports:** The director continues research on the theological and biblical issues of sexism, especially those that pertain to the interface of culture and theology and an understanding of power and authority from a theological perspective. Together with Research and Evaluation, Women of the ELCA, and the justice for women alliance, the justice for women program has conducted a pilot research piece, focused on the question, “What is the situation of justice for women in church and in society?”

Advocacy

Advocacy work in the justice for women program is currently focused upon four justice for women issues: commercial sexual exploitation, HIV-AIDS, domestic violence, and leadership.

An Invitation to Educate, Advocate, and Lead

Educate

Theology is the core of the work for justice for women. Without theological articulation, what this church works for in relation to justice for women may either appear to be without roots in the Lutheran tradition or indeed function without theological basis. No program or policy alone will effect the desired change toward justice for women unless it also addresses how people understand themselves, others, and God. Lutherans act out of the grace received from God through Jesus Christ, revealed in Word and Sacrament. This church, therefore, hopes, believes, and argues that its actions are grounded in the gospel of grace, as Luther argued in his treatise “The Freedom of a Christian.” What this means for members of this church is that they are invited to return to the theology of the Word that can shape their hearts and ground their actions. While policy guidelines are important and necessary in defining appropriate behavior and actions, no policy on justice for women alone can change the reality of sexism; hearts and minds must also be transformed. Members of this church are also challenged to act. This is also an argument Luther made: that because of God’s grace, a living faith means Christians act as Christ toward others.

Nevertheless, any action occurs in a paradoxical state of being in which humans are *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously justified and guilty). Anything this church and its members do to end sexism, racism, classism, or any other form of oppression relies upon re-formation in the body of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The roots of a theology of justice for women are creational and baptismal, for humans are lovingly formed by God’s love in the divine image and claimed and redeemed by God’s grace through the waters of baptism. Nevertheless, human brokenness interrupts (but does not ultimately conquer) the possibility of living the image of God (*imago dei*) of creation and the imitation of Christ (*imitatio christi*) of baptism. A theology of justice for women dwells within the eschatological hope—the promise of God’s horizon or future in the very present—found in the cross.

The concern and desire to integrate justice for women into the work of the ELCA is a committed and serious address of “the scandalous realities” of the multiple forms of oppression, including sexism, that infuse daily life and is rooted in the stark realization that justice for women in church and in society does

not prevail. Violence against women occurs in every minute of time in every corner of the globe.

What makes violence against women in its many forms possible is the objectification of women. All humans fail to honor the image of God in each other when they see other persons as means to their own ends, as objects that can be controlled and experienced on their own terms. Looking at church and society from a perspective that understands justice for women and girls as part of the baptismal covenant reveals that women and girls are objectified in a multiplicity of ways. To see females as the object of the male self or male society is inherently a power issue.

In order to invite this church into a transformation of how the world is seen and acted within, the first goal of the justice for women program in the ELCA is to educate.

Guiding questions include:

- How are women and girls objectified, especially in ways that are invisible to us because sexist patterns are so normative to our society and to our religion?
- What are the power dynamics of various situations in which there is a lack of justice for women?
- How do church beliefs and church practices serve either as a hindrance or as a benefit to justice for women in church and in society?
- How do social policies and practices function either as a hindrance or as a benefit to justice for women in church and in society?
- How are justice for women issues or problems around the world interrelated? Why is it important to understand the relationship, for example, between child marriage in Africa and the Hooters billboard in Chicago that reads, “Liquor in Hooters”?
- What can this church say about its own complicity in sexism?
- How can the ELCA be prophetic in the world—in both church and in society—in acting against injustice based upon biology?

Addressing sexism in church and in society is a challenge for this church. Truly seeing and feeling the causes and effects of sexism is painful, but it is not a journey made alone. As part of the priesthood of all believers, members of this church are called by God to minister to each other through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which includes discernment, analysis, and transformation to a new way of being. Every member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is called to address the scandalous realities of sexism and other forms of oppression. To this end, all members of the ELCA together with the churchwide organization are called to take on the challenges of confronting sexism in church and society.

Advocate

Working towards justice for women occurs not only through education, but also through advocacy. Although advocacy is often understood as legislative advocacy, it is certainly not limited to that. To advocate means “to give voice to,” and as such supports this church’s theological understanding that because Christians are justified by grace through faith, Christians “give voice” in word and action to the needs of their neighbors. Essentially, to advocate for justice for women means that members of this church are equipped to challenge practices and

beliefs, whether social or religious, that are unjust to women and girls. A broad understanding of advocacy means that advocacy happens not only with legislatures, but also in communities, churches, and homes. Members of this church can “give voice to” justice for women.

Lead

Being able to respond to injustice by advocating for change puts this church in the position to be a leader in the church catholic and in the world. By building upon and continuing to develop relationships within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, among ecumenical partners, and with secular bodies working to support and advance the livelihood and well-being of

women around the globe, this church has the opportunity to live into its calling to serve the world for the sake of Christ.

The *invitation to action* for justice for women calls upon this church to *educate, advocate, and lead* in its response to sexism. In order to provide for creativity, freedom, and contextualization specific to local communities and congregations, the invitation to action for this entire church is conceived through these three specific action verbs, through and under which ELCA leaders and members can shape and live out their own plans for action. Guidance, resources, and examples of ways to begin conversations about and actions away from sexism will be provided by the justice for women program.

Mary J. Struefert, *director for justice for women*

Purpose Statement: The justice for women program of the Church in Society unit challenges and works with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in all its expressions, to eradicate sexism in this church and to promote gender justice in society at large.

Working definition of “justice for women:” Justice for women occurs when the ways in which women and girls are objectified are rejected and the imago dei of women and girls is affirmed through both theology and policy, in church and in society.

Goals:

The goals of the invitation to address sexism in church and society are to help the ELCA
understand
challenge
and respond faithfully to
sexism
through a transformation of how we see, think, feel and act.

1. ELCA members understand justice for women and girls as a church issue.
2. ELCA members have theological ability to analyze church and society in terms of justice for women and girls.
3. ELCA members are equipped to challenge societal, theological, and ecclesial practices and beliefs that are unjust to women and girls.
4. ELCA members are able to respond by advocating for changes in church practice and belief, as well as social policy and practice, which bring about and reflect justice for women and girls.

Objectives: Educate, Advocate, Lead

In order to be able to understand, analyze, challenge, and respond, this church is invited to **Educate, Advocate, Lead** in making justice for women a reality.

Educate for justice

Advocate for change

Lead into the future