

**LUTHERAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY  
International Bylaws**

June 2016

**ARTICLE I. - NAME**

The name of this organization shall be the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS) of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS).

**ARTICLE II. – MISSION STATEMENT**

LWMS is women dedicated to serving Jesus by increasing awareness of, interest in, and support of the mission outreach of WELS.

**ARTICLE III. - MEMBERSHIP AND DUES**

A. Classifications and Qualifications

There shall be two (2) classes of membership in the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society (LWMS)-Congregational and Individual.

1. Congregational - A congregation (including an exploratory congregation and a foreign mission congregation) that is a member of WELS is eligible for membership. Any congregation which is a member of a church body in fellowship with WELS is eligible for membership. Congregational membership extends the privileges of full participation by all women in all aspects of the organization.
2. Individual - Any WELS woman of a non-LWMS member congregation or a woman whose congregation belongs to a church body in fellowship with WELS but not a member of LWMS may become a member. The individual member will receive all designated mailings but will not have voting privileges at the annual convention or for ballots for LWMS mission projects and officers. She may participate as an officer or committee member.
3. Membership Activation – Membership becomes effective upon payment of annual membership dues to LWMS. New members will be acknowledged at the annual convention.

Membership Forms - A congregation or an individual wishing to become a member may do so by applying for a membership form available from the LWMS Central Office. (The Central Office serves as headquarters for the organization.)

B. Dues

Annual dues are renewable yearly and payable by January 1 of each year. They are sent to the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society Central Office.

1. Congregational.....\$75 per year
2. Individual.....\$40 per year

## **ARTICLE IV. - ORGANIZATION**

### **A. On the local level:**

The women in WELS congregations or in congregations which belong to a church body in fellowship with WELS shall be free to organize according to ARTICLE IX. Under any organizational basis, the interest and the wishes of the member congregation and pastor must be respected.

### **B. On the circuit level:**

1. Congregations holding LWMS membership are encouraged to form a circuit and hold semi-annual mission rallies.
2. It is recommended that in the interest of unity the circuits adopt bylaws patterned after the sample LWMS circuit bylaws.

### **C. On the non-circuit level:**

Congregations not affiliated with a circuit receive the same rights and privileges as congregations affiliated with a circuit. All materials and services are available to them. They shall be called non-circuit members.

### **D. On the international level:**

1. Each member congregation shall be entitled to one delegate and one alternate at the annual convention.
2. The member congregations shall elect the officers and determine the mission projects to be supported for the current year by mail-in or electronic ballot.
3. Individual members shall have no voting privileges.

## **ARTICLE V. - OFFICERS**

### **A. Elected Officers**

The following individuals shall be the Board of Directors (hereinafter referred to as the board): president, president-elect, vice president, secretary, treasurer, spiritual growth-mission awareness coordinator, communications coordinator, and two pastoral advisors.

### **B. Term of Office**

1. Term of the president shall be two (2) years. The president shall serve for one term only.
2. Term of the president-elect shall be two (2) years. At the end of the term, the president-elect shall automatically succeed to the office of president.
3. Term of office of all other officers shall be two (2) years.
4. Length of service for any one office shall be limited to two (2) consecutive terms.
5. Any officer having served two (2) consecutive terms shall not be nominated to any office for a period of four (4) years.

C. Vacancy in Office

The board shall fill vacancies in office. The appointments may be pro tem (i.e., for the time being) or, in the case of a resignation, for the remainder of the term.

D. Duties of the Board

All elected officers shall constitute the board. They shall:

1. Conduct the business and affairs of LWMS.
2. Ensure that the Central Office has office space and is properly staffed.
3. Appoint and direct all committees.
4. Serve on a board committee, if requested.
5. Serve as a board contact for a standing committee, if requested.
6. Attend the meetings of the board and the annual convention.

E. Duties of Officers

1. President - The president shall be responsible for the management of the organization and shall preside at all annual conventions and at meetings of the board. She shall appoint special and standing committees with board approval, and she shall appoint a board contact for each standing committee. She shall chair the Executive Committee. She shall be an ex-officio member of all board and standing committees. She shall keep the president-elect fully informed on all matters concerning the organization.
2. President-elect - The president-elect shall perform the presidential duties in the absence of the president. She shall share in the duties of the president during her two years as president-elect as directed by the president. She shall chair the Nomination Committee and the Ballot Committee. She shall assume responsibility for the management of the organization in her third year. She shall perform other duties as assigned by the president or board.
3. Vice president - The vice president shall perform the duties of the president and president-elect in their absences. She shall preside at the meetings of the spiritual growth-mission awareness committee and coordinate the work of this committee. She shall perform other duties as assigned by the president or board.
4. Secretary - The secretary shall keep the minutes of the annual convention, regular and special meetings as called by the board. She shall serve as chairman of the board membership committee. She shall see that all notices are duly given in accordance with provisions of these bylaws and be custodian of the organization's records. She shall perform other duties as assigned by the president or board.
5. Treasurer - The treasurer shall receive and record all mission offerings and other income and make disbursements according to the resolution of the annual convention and the board. She shall chair the Finance Committee. She shall perform other duties as assigned by the president or board.
6. Spiritual Growth-Mission Awareness Coordinator - The spiritual growth-mission awareness coordinator shall serve on the spiritual growth-mission awareness committee and be responsible for carrying out the committee's purpose and objectives. She shall

perform other duties as assigned by the president or board.

7. Communications Coordinator - The communications coordinator shall chair the communications committee. She shall also attend all meetings of the spiritual growth-mission awareness committee. She shall coordinate the work of the communications committee and be responsible for carrying out the committee's purpose and objectives. She shall perform other duties as assigned by the president or board.
8. Pastoral Advisors - The pastoral advisors shall be spiritual advisors and general counselors in all matters. One pastoral advisor shall serve on the spiritual growth-mission awareness committee and one pastoral advisor shall serve on the nomination and membership committees. They shall perform other duties as assigned by the president or board.

F. Performance of Duties

If any officer has established an inability to perform the duties of his/her office, or who willfully neglects his/her duty, and upon due admonition does not amend, the board has the right and duty to remove such officer and to appoint a replacement until the vacancy can be filled by regular mail-in ballot.

**ARTICLE VI. - NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS**

A. Nominations

1. The board nomination committee shall submit a slate of two (2) candidates for each office.
2. Candidates for office are to be chosen from members of LWMS.

B. Elections

1. A plurality shall constitute an election (i.e., the candidate having the greatest number of votes).
2. Each member congregation shall be entitled to cast one vote.
3. The election of the board president-elect, treasurer, spiritual growth-mission awareness coordinator, and one (1) pastoral advisor shall be held in odd-numbered years.
4. The election of the board vice-president, secretary, communications coordinator, and one (1) pastoral advisor shall be held in even-numbered years.

C. Voting

1. All officers shall be elected by mail-in or electronic ballot.
2. A vote by mail-in or electronic ballot shall be allowed for the election of officers and for the selection of mission offering projects. Write-in votes for the election of officers will be allowed.
3. Each member congregation shall be entitled one vote for the selection of mission offering projects and election of officers. Mail-in or electronic votes will be the only methods of voting on these two items.
4. Ballots will be due in the Lutheran Women's Missionary Society Central Office by the

date specified on the ballot.

5. Ballots not received by the specified date will not be counted in the total votes cast. In the event of a tie, the president will cast the vote to break the tie.

## **ARTICLE VII. - MEETINGS**

- A. Special Meetings, if necessary, may be called by the board.
- B. Conventions
  1. The organization shall meet in convention annually in the month of June.
  2. The LWMS official publication shall notify all member congregations and individual members of the organization at least one month in advance of the annual convention.
  3. The board shall serve as a steering committee for the time and place of the annual convention and shall plan the program. They may appoint committees to assist them.
- C. Convention Sites
  1. LWMS circuits may extend an invitation to host an annual convention by submitting a suggested year to the board for consideration.
  2. Final selection of the annual convention sites shall be made by the board with consideration being given to prior convention locations and accessibility for the members, the board, and mission speakers. The economic feasibility of conducting a convention in any given area or site shall be considered.
- D. Quorum
  1. Each member congregation shall be entitled to one delegate and one alternate at the annual convention.
  2. The members represented by officially registered delegates or alternates to a properly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.
- E. Items of Business from Member Congregations (Introducing items of business to the organization)
  1. Items of business from member congregations to be brought to the attention of the organization shall be in writing and sent to the board for consideration and direction to the membership.
    - a. All items of business must be received by January 1 of the year of the convention for possible inclusion in the business meeting agenda.
    - b. All items of business to come before the membership shall be printed in the organization's official publication or in an official mailing by the board by May 10, preceding any action at the annual convention, giving membership the opportunity to discuss the matter and advise their delegate of possible considerations for their vote.
  2. Any item of business to come before the membership for action at the convention business meeting may be amended by a voting delegate. A written copy of the proposed amendment shall be given to the presiding officer.

## ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES

### A. Board Committees

1. Executive Committee - Chaired by the president, this committee also includes the president-elect and a pastoral advisor. If necessary, the president may appoint more board members to this committee. The committee will meet as called upon by the president to discuss and handle specific items that affect the organization.
2. Finance Committee - Chaired by the treasurer, three other officers will be appointed to serve on this committee. The committee will meet during regularly scheduled board meetings to review and discuss the finances and investments of the organization and make recommendations to the board.
3. Membership Committee - Chaired by the secretary, this committee also includes the president and/or president-elect, the treasurer, and a pastoral advisor. The committee is responsible for all aspects of increasing and retaining membership, to include assisting in the forming of new circuits and promotional materials. The committee will meet prior to or during regularly scheduled board meetings. The committee will meet during regularly scheduled board meetings.
4. Nomination Committee - Chaired by the president-elect, this committee also includes the president, secretary, treasurer, and a pastoral advisor. The committee shall solicit nominees for filling board positions and make recommendations to the board at its winter meeting. A slate of two (2) candidates for each office will be approved by the board and ballots prepared for mail-in voting by the membership. The committee will meet during regularly scheduled board meetings.
5. Spiritual Growth-Mission Awareness Committee - Chaired by the vice president, this committee also includes the spiritual growth-mission awareness coordinator, a pastoral advisor and the communications coordinator. The committee will meet during regularly scheduled board meetings. The committee will oversee mission awareness and spiritual growth activities and projects and will recommend home and world projects for the distribution of mission offerings to be voted on by the membership.

### B. Special Committees

1. Review (Auditing) Committee - The board shall provide for independent person with financial expertise to review (audit) the treasurer's financial records. The review (audit) shall be completed by June 1 of each year.
2. Ballot Committee - Chaired by the president-elect, this committee consists of members appointed at the annual convention for the purpose of counting the mail-in and electronic ballots.

### C. Standing Committees

1. Appointments - Three or more LWMS members shall be appointed to serve on these committees. They shall represent the geographical diversity of the membership. The president shall appoint the chair of each committee.
2. Board Contacts - A member of the board shall be appointed to serve as a board contact for each standing committee and serve as the communication link between the board and the committee chair.

3. Terms - Appointment to a standing committee will be for three years. A member may be reappointed for another three-year term. No member shall serve more than six consecutive years on any one committee.
4. Performance - If any standing committee member is unable to perform or willfully neglects the duties assigned for more than 120 days and, upon due admonition by the board does not amend, the board has the right and duty to remove the committee member and appoint a replacement to complete the term of appointment.
5. Vacancies - The board shall fill vacancies as soon as possible.
6. Duties of Standing Committees
  - a. Bylaws Committee - The bylaws committee shall review the international and circuit bylaws. The committee shall make bylaws recommendations to the board annually and, upon approval, shall be responsible for presenting amendments to the membership.
  - b. Communications Committee - The communications committee, chaired by the communications coordinator, shall be responsible for creating and maintaining professional, interesting, and informative communications for the organization at the direction of the board.

#### **ARTICLE IX. - MEMBER CONGREGATION**

Suggested guidelines for organization of member congregation's LWMS mission-directed activities:

##### A. Organization

1. The women of a congregation may divide into a group or groups or divide within an existing group.
2. A reporter shall be elected or selected for the group or groups, or the congregation. The reporter shall serve as the communicator within the group/groups and congregation. She may serve as chair. She shall serve as the local liaison to the circuit and to LWMS as requested. If a non-circuit congregation, the reporter is the communicator to LWMS.
3. The group, groups, or women of the congregation as a whole may meet monthly or as determined by the women. (It is recommended that they meet at least quarterly.)
4. If a group desires to have a set of bylaws for matters not covered by the LWMS or circuit bylaws, they are free to have one.
5. Each member congregation shall be entitled to one delegate and one alternate at the annual convention.

**NOTE: Under any organizational basis, the interest and wishes of the member congregation and pastor must be respected.**

##### B. Spiritual Growth

The pastor may present Bible studies/devotions or serve as discussion leader. The reporter (or other designated women) may act in this capacity with the guidance and approval of the pastor.

C. Mission Awareness

The pastor, reporter, chairman, or other designated women shall present mission information at the meeting. The reporter shall promote the Befriend A Mission program. The official publications and Web site of LWMS may be used as sources of current mission information. The pastor is also a resource for mission information.

D. Mission Offerings

1. Mission offerings through the use of mission boxes or other methods of collection shall be gathered as determined by the women. (It is recommended that they be collected at least semi-annually.)
2. Mission offerings shall be remitted to the LWMS circuit treasurer if a member of a circuit. If not, non-circuit and individual members shall remit mission offerings directly to the LWMS treasurer c/o the Central Office. (See Article X. - Mission Offerings.)

E. Duties of Reporters

1. The reporter(s) shall receive the official LWMS publications.
2. The reporter shall transmit information from the official LWMS publications, area circuit news, plus all other pertinent information to the congregation with the cooperation of the local pastor.
3. The reporter shall supervise the ordering and distribution of mission boxes and official publications of the LWMS.
4. The reporter shall promote the Befriend A Mission program on the congregational level.
5. The reporter shall see to it that the annual membership dues for her congregation are remitted by January 1 of each year to LWMS c/o the Central Office.
6. The reporter shall see to it that a delegate and alternate from her congregation are appointed or elected by May 1 for the annual convention held each June. The delegate will serve to ratify necessary business presented at the annual convention by the board.
7. The reporter(s) of a congregation shall receive the ballots. Only one ballot in each election is to be returned from each congregation; otherwise all ballots from the congregation are invalid.

**ARTICLE X - MISSION OFFERINGS**

A. Member congregations may distribute mission boxes to each person interested in LWMS for collecting mission offerings. Mission boxes are available from the Central Office.

B. Collection of Mission Offerings:

1. Where circuits are organized, the circuit shall be in charge of the collection of mission offerings from affiliated congregations.
  - a. 75% of collected mission offerings is to be used by the circuit organization for its locally selected mission projects.
  - b. 25% of collected mission offerings is to be sent to the LWMS treasurer by May



25 of each year.

2. Congregations not affiliated with a circuit may remit their entire mission offerings by May 25 of each year to the LWMS treasurer c/o the Central Office for distribution at the annual convention. Or they remit 25% of their mission offerings to the LWMS treasurer c/o the Central Office for distribution at the annual convention and remit 75% to mission projects they select.
  3. Individual members shall send their mission offerings directly to the LWMS treasurer c/o the Central Office by May 25 of each year.
- C. Distribution of the mission offerings and the selection of the mission projects to be supported by LWMS shall be determined by the vote of the member congregations. Each member congregation shall be entitled to cast one vote.
- D. In the interest of unity, circuits are encouraged to follow the spirit of the LWMS projects selection policy in cooperation with WELS Boards for Home and World Missions.

LWMS POLICY - LWMS policy is to support such non-budgetary mission projects which are of benefit to the entire synod, rather than projects in local missions. All suggestions of projects that we might sponsor shall come from WELS Boards for Home and World Missions. These boards shall also disburse the funds we make available. The projects selected shall not be merely incidental, but truly essential to the administration of the Means of Grace in our mission fields.

#### **ARTICLE XI. - REPEAL AND AMENDMENT**

- A. Proposals to repeal or amend any of these bylaws shall be offered in writing to the board by January 1 of the year of the convention and to the members in the organization's official publication or in a special mailing preceding any action thereon at the next annual convention.
- B. At the annual convention, a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all delegates present shall be necessary to pass the proposal.

#### **ARTICLE XII. - PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall be followed for parliamentary procedure. Meetings shall be conducted according to good Christian order.

#### **ARTICLE XIII. - DISSOLUTION**

Should dissolution of this organization occur, which God may graciously prevent, all property and financial assets shall revert to WELS.

The articles of these bylaws adopted by the 2016 annual convention.