

## BASIC BYLAWS

Bylaws are not set in stone. Bylaws are a permanent document, intentionally difficult to change, but should be current. They can be changed, and ought to be, if the language has proven to be confusing and ambiguous or the structure is outdated and impractical. Bylaws need to live and breathe, reflecting the group's thinking and present practice.

**Five (5) articles** – Name, Object, Members, Representation at Convention, and Parliamentary Authority – must be in compliance with the LWML bylaws.

### **Name**

Identify the organization. State the full, exact, properly punctuated name. Also state affiliation with the LWML and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

### **Object**

State the organization's purpose.

Begin with the object of the LWML, as required. The object of the LWML is: to develop and to maintain a greater mission consciousness among the women of the Synod through Mission Education, Mission Inspiration, and Mission Service; to gather funds for mission grants either directly sponsored or approved by LCMS boards or LCMS district presidents, especially those for which no adequate provision has been made in LCMS or LCMS district budgets. Then add others as desired. Be specific (e.g., foster Bible study and fellowship).

### **Members**

#### **Specify:**

- who can become a member.
- how one becomes a member.
- how membership is maintained.
- the rights and duties of members.

### **Representation at Conventions**

- Include how the group is represented in the other LWML events such as rallies and conventions.
- State how delegates/alternates are selected and list their responsibilities.

### **Parliamentary Authority**

This provides for a standard set of rules for conducting business. All organizations affiliated with LWML must use the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

## **BYLAWS TIPS**

### **Bylaws should:**

- be short and concise.
- be organized into articles, as main headings, with further division into sections and subsections.
- be carefully worded so as to avoid misunderstanding and confusion.
- use correct punctuation for clarity.
- have all pages numbered and dated.
- include a table of contents.
- be consistent in terminology. (Use of the LWML Style Guide is suggested.)
- include reference to individual members of the LWML.
- be reviewed on a regular basis.

## **Reviewing Bylaws**

### **As You Start**

- Check your current bylaws for outdated procedures, contradictions, lack of consistency, similar objects not treated/grouped together, ambiguous language, too many details or incomplete information, patchwork effect, lack of dates.
- Follow the prescribed process for amendments or revision.
- Involve every member in discussion about what the bylaws say.
- Encourage questions and suggestions on how to improve the bylaws language.

### **During the Review Process**

- Write bylaws as one word.
- Strike the word local when referring to societies/groups, since this is redundant.
- Specify who fills a vacancy in the office of president (or leader), should one occur, and by what procedure.
- Give every opportunity for input into the amendment's final form.

### **Remember To**

- Send the required number of copies of amendments or revisions (along with copies of current bylaws) to the appropriate body for approval prior to presentation for adoption. (Zones or districts may approve group bylaws, districts usually approve zone bylaws and the LWML approves district bylaws.
- Allow an appropriate turn-around time for the approving body to do its work.
- Give adequate notice about the date for final approval (usually at the previous regular meeting).

### **After Adoption**

- Record at the end of your bylaws the original date of adoption and dates of subsequent amendments (month and year).
- Send the required number of copies of approved bylaws to the appropriate body of filing.
- Make copies of the amended bylaws and distribute them to each member.
- Encourage each member to take ownership of the bylaws.