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So – You Want to Start an ECW!

This packet is a tool to help you think about how to form a new ECW group or revitalize your present one. This is intended to be only a sampling – a resource reference to “jump start” your plans.

Many Episcopal Church Women are eager to assist and advise you as you develop your group’s plans. We encourage you to call your Convocation Chair, or any member of the ECW Board (list at back of this packet), if you need inspiration or assistance. And by all means visit our website at www.arkansasecw.org to see what we do and what we have to offer.

Arkansas ECW MISSION Statement

The mission of the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) is to bring together the women of the Diocese of Arkansas and to strengthen their spiritual lives both by providing opportunities for their learning and fellowship and by supporting their Christ-centered service and ministry. We are a community of Christian believers who celebrate God’s love through service, worship and prayer. We believe that we are called to spread Christ’s teachings through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, by ministering to each other and by reaching out to all humankind.

ECW Prayer

Almighty God, we pray that you will bless our work in mission and ministry in the world. Help us to pray fervently, labor diligently, and give liberally to make known the power of your love, given through your son Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the lessons of the past nor fear the challenges of the future. Anoint us with your grace and shine in our hearts as we reflect your light throughout the world. Amen

A Vision for the Episcopal Church Women

In 2003 the national board of the Episcopal Church Women adopted this Vision Statement as a part of a discussion about their future:

“Our vision for all women of the Episcopal Church is that we become a vibrant blend of all ages, coming together as a peacemaking, healing part of the church.”

Verna Dozier, theologian and Biblical scholar, said, “Don’t tell me what you believe; tell me what difference it makes that you believe.” The National Board of the Episcopal Church Women recognized the importance of this statement and consequently called every Episcopal woman into action to make a difference. This is something women do effectively as individuals, but think of the difference that we can make when we come together to do so!

What are the women in your congregation doing to make a difference?

Are these opportunities being offered in an organized and consistent way in your church?

What is your vision for the Episcopal Church Women in your parish?

How can you make that vision a reality?

What Will Make Your ECW Appealing?

Preferred Women's Activities in American Churches Today:

- #1. Bible/spiritual growth study groups that meet regularly
- #2. Retreats or conferences
- #3. Outreach - hands-on involvement or fundraising activities
- #4. Education/self-improvement/leadership development
- #5. Fun/fellowship opportunities
- #6. Childcare is provided

Women's Activities That Are Being Resisted Today:

Traditional meetings that emphasize business

Fundraising to support the church or its programs

Extensive food preparation and/or hospitality functions

Programs that are secular in nature

Tips for Attracting New ECW Members

The most important thing to remember about getting women involved is to ask them face to face, friend to friend, or through acquaintances. The “climate” of the ECW group must be inviting, always welcoming of newcomers, and a loving community of Christian women. Positive energy and a “can do” spirit helps assure success.

Who to ask -

Think about women who need a new focus, have recently retired, are in a new life state, or have made a recent move into the church and need to connect, make friends, and find a significant ministry. Seek assistance from clergy, lay coordinators, other staff, or parishioners who know lots of members.

How to recruit -

Talk about how you have benefitted from participating in ECW or women’s ministry and how you see this as a vital part of the mission of your church. If they appear interested, have another person they may know or know-of call to discuss the benefits of participating.

Provide any written/other information concerning ECW at all levels - local, diocesan, provincial, national. Share the website addresses. Provide job descriptions with time commitments.

Invite them into the life of ECW by helping them connect with others and feel comfortable.

Give them time to make a decision. Don’t pressure them for an immediate answer.

How to Move Forward with Health and Vitality

Healthy ECWs understand the purposes of their organizations.

They often have written mission statements expressing these, and they organize and evaluate everything they do around them.

Are you addressing the felt needs of women in your church today?

Or are you doing things the same way you did ten years ago?

Activities that focus on building community among the women of your church are critical. Small groups of women who meet regularly for study, prayer, and fellowship are key to larger groups addressing the spiritual needs of women.

ECWs with vitality have a team leadership approach. These teams work together and support each other.

Smart ECWs work closely with their clergy. They express their desire to be a part of the clergy's/ vestry's vision for the church.

Productive ECWs have well-defined ministries, in-reach (to benefit the church), outreach, and spiritual growth. Outreach ministries are extremely important and attract younger women.

Communication is KEY, in this order: face-to-face, telephone, email, texting, postcards, announcements, signs and posters.

ECW leadership must periodically go into retreat to pray together for guidance, reflect on the current situation, evaluate and plan.

Remember: Women gather today for inspiration, education, fellowship, fun, usefulness, and opportunities to escape a frantic lifestyle. Women under fifty will only spend their precious free time on activities that address their needs. Older members must be willing to adjust.

The Values of Living American Generations

The Silent and Builder Generations – born before 1945

Lives were shaped by the Great Depression
 Suffered through World War II
 Learned to live on very little
 Material things were true luxuries
 Very talented at “making do.” Debt was to be avoided
 Men provided, women stayed home to raise children
 Women were the primary volunteers in the churches
 Divorce was not socially acceptable
 Extremely loyal to institutions: government, church, organizations
 Life is work
 Work and Family highest values

The Baby Boomer Generation – born between 1945-1964

Largest group in America – 1 in 3
 Grew up in Fifties – All new opportunities
 Wanted to re-shape everything – very idealistic
 Vietnam affected trust in government, institutions
 Desired social change, civil rights, personal rights
 First generation to send women to college
 First generation to have two-income households
 Women’s leadership development – In for profit – CEO’s
 Church denominational allegiance lost
 No longer have to be a church member to be respected
 Want to commune with God in the garden, on the golf course
 Moral rule breakdown – situational ethics okay
 Loss of caring for society. Lawyers and lawsuits rule
 Work drives life, busy-ness valued, families ruled by schedules

Generation "X" - born between 1964-1978

Entertainment central. Ease with technology
Known as "entitled" generation
Feeling loved and accepted a high priority
50% come from broken homes and blended families
Emotional pain has been central to their lives
Search for intimacy is driving force in their lives
Want personal, relational connectedness to their organizations
Fear of the future dominates - families, AIDS, jobs, etc.
Family defined as those who love them
Want to be part of a community that is open, safe, and inclusive
Live in contradiction: Pro-Choice, but Pro-Life for animals, trees
Very "Spiritual," whether Christianity, New Age or cults
As parents, they have academic and physical goals for their kids
Yearn for moral boundaries
Church must be welcoming and relationship-building
Conversion comes *after* the loving church community is found
Work supports play, lifestyle, and entertainment

Millennials or Generation Y - born after 1978

Parented by others, latch key, day-care kids
Large economic differences between rich and poor
High tech and connected
Accustomed to comfort, casual, "As I Am," and want it in church
The "disillusioned" generation, very open to spirituality
Relationships extremely important
Anger and violence causes them to be at risk
Huge gulf between their grandparents and themselves
Life is play, work is forced, entertainment is central

About the Episcopal Church Women

The Episcopal Church Women as an organization functions at four levels: National, Province, Diocese, and Parish.

National: The National Board, which meets three times per year, is comprised of the President, Vice-President of Program, Vice-President for Information, Secretary, Treasurer, Member-at-Large for Social Justice, Member-at Large for Multi-Media, and on Representative from each of the nine provinces. The National Board does not exercise authority or control over provincial, diocesan, or parish ECW groups, but acts as the organizational entity which binds together the women of the church. Communication between the board members and women at all levels throughout the church helps the National Board to fulfill their stated mission – to support all women in their ministry. Specifically, the Board plans the Triennial Meeting, oversees programs such as Women of Vision and Women to Women.

Province: The Episcopal Church is comprised of nine Provinces. Although they may function differently, each Province has a President and an ECW Board.

Diocese: The Episcopal Church is comprised of 111 Dioceses. Almost all of them have an ECW or a Women's Ministries Board. You can see the list of the Arkansas ECW Board members at the back of this packet. We are a vibrant and active board who plan numerous activities throughout the year for the benefit of the women of this Diocese.

Parish: The number of parishes in the dioceses ranges from 28 to almost 200. Most parishes have active ECW or Women's Ministries groups. Arkansas has 56 parishes, and about half of these have active ECW groups. We would like to have active ECW chapters in every parish in the state, and we are working toward that end.

History of the Episcopal Church Women

At the 30th General Convention, held in Baltimore in 1871, the Board of Missions received permission to organize a Women's Society. The Emery sisters, Mary Abbott, Julia Chester, Susan Lavinia, and Margaret Theresa, were instrumental in the early organization of the Women's Auxiliary. Mary wrote to every rector asking for cooperation in appointing a correspondent from that parish to help organize an Auxiliary Missionary Society, or in forming a relationship with a society already active in that parish. Thus began a continuing communication link to encourage, inform, recruit, and guide.

The first Triennial Meeting of the Women's Auxiliary met in 1874 at the same time and place as the 31st General Convention. Sixty-six women from five states gathered. By the second Triennial Meeting in 1877, forty-eight dioceses had formally organized groups. Much of the early work of the Women's Auxiliary was to address the problem of funding women who dedicated their lives to mission work. In preparation for the 1898 Triennial Meeting, the women sent out to the parishes 25,000 United Thank Offering collection boxes which gathered in \$82,818.56. The increasing number of participants prompted a change in 1907 in which only the officers of diocesan organizations could attend the Triennial Meeting in order to seat everyone.

The Women's Triennial Meeting in 1922 reflected a new concept in program and organization. A National Board had formed to oversee the direction of work in supporting missionaries, in social service, and in religious education and prayer.

Prior to the 1958 Triennial Meeting, the Women's Auxiliary Executive Board became the General Division of Women's Work. The Triennial Meeting adopted the necessary bylaws which included a designation that diocesan groups would be known as Episcopal Church Women and parish groups would be known as the Women of _____.

Between 1958 and 1985, the role of women in the Church went through numerous and significant changes. As women entered into seminaries and became ordained, elected to vestries and as deputies to General Convention and otherwise mainstreamed, the Episcopal Church Women struggled with their position in the Church. Over time, the national structure changed from being a part of the National Church structure to being an independent group, culminating in the creation of the National Board of the Episcopal Church Women in 1985.

Episcopal Church Women in Arkansas A Brief History

1842: Missionary Episcopal Bishop Otey visits Little Rock and consecrates Christ Church, which had been organized in 1839. The Ladies Aid Society raised more than half the funds for the church.

1885: Mary Emery Twing comes to Arkansas from New York and meets with the women of Christ Church. At her suggestion they form an official unit of the Women's Auxiliary, which had been organized nationally in 1874.

1895: Official organization of the Women's Auxiliary at Trinity Cathedral.

1896: Diocesan Branch of the Women's Auxiliary is organized at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Newport, Mrs. J. B. Pillow, Helena, President. (Mrs. Pillow served as President for twenty years.)

1938: The Arkansas Bishop's wife, Mrs. Vivian Mitchell, writes *The Women's Auxiliary Handbook* with directions month by month. One quote: "The President should be selected for her leadership abilities, devotion to church or as a last resort."

1942: Mrs. Newell, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Leigh killed driving home from Women's Institute on Petit Jean Mountain.

1952: Deputies to General Convention from the Diocese of Arkansas are instructed to vote against allowing women on vestries or to serve as delegates to Diocesan Convention.

1961: Women's Auxiliary becomes Episcopal Church Women, nationally.

1977: Peggy Bosmyer becomes the first woman member of the clergy in Arkansas. She was also the first woman member of the clergy west of the Mississippi and south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

2006: Arkansan Harriet Neer becomes the President of National ECW.

2009: Arkansan Sandra Powers becomes Treasurer of National ECW.

Arkansas ECW's Annual Events

Winter Interlude is a three day retreat in January which focuses on helping women of all ages unwind after the hustle and bustle of the holidays. What better place than Camp Mitchell to relax and enjoy the magnificence of God's beauty and love?

Time for JOY is a weekend retreat at Camp Mitchell designed for young women living stress-filled lives, be they single, married, divorced, working in the home or outside the home. The purpose of the retreat is to provide experiences which affirm and encourage young women in their spiritual journey.

Women's Institute: Summer Quest begins on Friday at Camp Mitchell with a personal spiritual growth day known as Quiet Day. Institute also features two additional days with a noteworthy speaker, workshops, time to rest, and lots of love and laughter. Women's Institute: Summer Quest is a strong tradition of the Arkansas Church Women that continues to draw women together, year after year, for personal experiences of the Divine, friendship and fun.

Fall Gathering is our statewide annual meeting, one day of fun, fellowship, and good food held at parish churches around the state.

Arkansas ECW's Ministries

United Thank Offering



United Thank Offering, often referred to as UTO, is a ministry that provides a way for men, women, and children of the Episcopal Church to give daily thanks to God. Every year, the total offering is between two and a half and three million dollars – all of which is used to support grants for missions and ministry. More than one hundred grants are awarded each year through UTO. Arkansas has received twenty-three grants, totaling \$300,000, from 1961 to present. At the last Triennial, Arkansas gave almost \$40,000 for the last three-year period of collections.

The Giving Cycle

The discipline starts in the homes by dropping coins into a special container known as the Blue Box. Many families and individuals drop a coin in the Blue Box each time prayers of thanksgiving are offered. At specific in-gatherings during the year, individuals and families bring their Blue Boxes to their local congregation. Then, the funds are collected and joined together with funds from other dioceses. The local in-gathering funds are to be forwarded to the diocesan ECW Treasurer by check made payable to ECW in Arkansas and mailed to the Treasurer as directed on the Contribution Form on our website.

The Grant Cycle

Just as the offering cycle starts locally by putting coins in the Blue Box, the granting cycle begins locally with proposals from parishes and mission outreach programs. Forms for grant requests are obtained from the diocesan office beginning in October. In the U.S. the forms are completed and returned to the diocesan office by the requestor, by the diocesan deadline, and signed by the diocesan bishop. Each diocese may submit two requests each year. All requests are researched by the UTO Committee. Grant requests and other related information can be found on the website of the Episcopal Church at <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/united-thank-offering>.

Women of Vision



Women of Vision is a scripturally-based leadership skills development program designed to empower women in all aspects of their lives—at home, at work, in the church, and in the world. The program is based upon the belief that people, in all their diversity, have varieties of gifts that must be included in the total ministry of the church. The program provides a venue that helps women to discern their role in the church, to gain tools for working together productively as the people of God, and to lead with wisdom. For information or to inquire about bringing Women of Vision to your ECW/parish, notify the contact person listed on our website.

Daughters of the King



Daughters of the King is an order for women who are communicants of the Episcopal Church, or churches in communion with it, or churches who are in the Historic Episcopate such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and in the Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America. Members undertake a Rule of Life, incorporating the Rule of Prayer and the Rule of Service. By reaffirmation of the promises made at Confirmation, a Daughter pledges herself to a life-long program of prayer, service and evangelism, dedicated to the spread of Christ's Kingdom and the strengthening of the spiritual life of her parish. Contact the current DOK board member for more information.

Church Periodical Club

The Church Periodical Club, often referred to as CPC, is an independent, affiliated organization of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America that is committed to supplying theological and educational materials in support of mission efforts around the world. The Church Periodical Club provides free Prayer Books, textbooks, Bibles, and periodicals to deserving recipients throughout the Anglican Communion. For more information about the Church Periodical Club, or to obtain a grant request, look on our website and contact the current CPC board member.

Miles of Pennies

Miles of Pennies, often referred to as MOP, is the second national granting fund of the Church Periodical Club. This separate fund is for children only, pre-school to grade 12. In addition to providing printed or taped books and related materials, Miles of Pennies give grants for the shipping costs of recycled children's books. More information about Miles of Pennies is available by contacting the Miles of Pennies board member listed on our website.

ECW Foundation

The ECW Foundation is a fund that was established by the diocesan ECW Board in 2004 to provide an endowment for women's ministries. When the fund reaches its principal goal of \$100,000, funding will be made available that supports these various ministries of women. The objective is to put our resources where they will work now and for many generations to come. Permanent funds provide a legacy to those we hope to mentor in the future, our daughters, granddaughters and heirs. It symbolizes our commitment to pass on the unique ministries that women share.

To contribute to this fund, please print and fill out the Contribution Form found on our website. Contributions are tax deductible. Questions may be directed to the current ECW Foundation board member.