



LWML History

"There's no question the church is behind you because in so many ways you are ahead of the church." With those words, a Lutheran historian applauded the progress of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) since its founding in 1942. Its roots, however, go back nearly a century earlier.

Beginning in the 1850s, women of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) www.lcms.org started local auxiliaries to meet the needs of people—mending clothes for seminarians, equipping hospitals, establishing schools, developing convalescent and retirement homes, assisting orphanages and residences for people with disabilities, gathering clothing, furniture and food for indigents, and funding mission endeavors at home and abroad.

Not until the 1920s, however, did members of congregational societies begin to coordinate their efforts by uniting in state and regional leagues. Oklahoma was first in 1928, but it took more than a decade before official approval was granted for a national LCMS women's organization.

Written by Marlys Taege Moberg

In response to resolutions from two district groups, the 1938 LCMS convention established a committee to study “the problem” (of establishing a synodwide women’s organization). The committee’s 1941 report was favorable, and the Synod not only approved, but encouraged the creation of a general organization of women. Five pastors were appointed to arrange a meeting of representatives from interested districts.

At that meeting, held July 7–8, 1942, at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois, the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League was founded by delegates from 15 districts. Today it is active in every district of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. LWML has set a pattern for similar organizations in other countries where there are LCMS partner churches.

Why Purple?

The official colors of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League are purple and gold. According to the Southern Illinois Lutheran Woman’s Quarterly Supplement, October 1948, the Southern Illinois district was the first to adopt the colors of purple, symbolizing royalty, and gold, symbolizing value and integrity.

The LWML Executive Board adopted purple and gold at their board meeting held on July 24, 1951, at the Commodore Hotel New York, New York. The minutes of this meeting state: “Motion was made by Mrs. Emil Frank to recommend that the colors Purple and Gold as suggested in the Handbook, be adopted as the official League colors. Action – Adopted.” This historical decision is noted on page 77 of Wings (© 1991).