

**Call to be Family/Lutheran Marriage Encounter
North American Region
By-Laws**

I. PURPOSE

Call To Be Family is a ministry incorporated in the state of Washington as a non-profit corporation with a registered name of *Lutheran Marriage Encounter*. The purpose of this ministry is to spread the weekend concepts of Worldwide Marriage Encounter with the primary purposes to:

- Strengthen the couple relationship
- Strengthen the couple relationship with God
- Strengthen and renew the Lutheran Church

Mission Statement:

Lutheran Marriage Encounter is a ministry dedicated to assisting married couples to live fully intimate and responsible relationships by providing an Encounter weekend experience as well as ongoing community support.

Vision Statement:

A church renewed and a world changed through strengthened couple relationships and stronger personal relationships with Christ.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- A. Relationship to International Lutheran Marriage Encounter (ILME)** – The North American Region (NAR) of Lutheran Marriage Encounter (LME) is a part of International Lutheran Marriage Encounter with responsibility for mission and ministry within the geography agreed to by the ILME Council.
- B. International Charter and Council** – International Lutheran Marriage Encounter is an international organization with no legal standing that coordinates activities and lends support to the ministry of Lutheran Marriage Encounter world-wide. International Lutheran Marriage Encounter operates under a Charter endorsed by all LME Regions. The North American Region Lay and Clergy Executives will represent the North American Region on the International Lutheran Marriage Encounter Council. The NAR By-Laws will be maintained to be consistent with the ILME Charter.
- C. North American Region** – The North American Region consists of North America including Canada, United States and Central America, plus islands and possessions usually associated with these areas. The North American Region will be divided into Districts, and Districts divided into Areas. Although Districts and Areas are defined as geographical

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entities, the concept of “family” as described in the ILME Charter shall prevail in the activities and attitudes within the organization.

- D. Relationship to Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME)** – International Lutheran Marriage Encounter operates under a license granted by Worldwide Marriage Encounter. The principal reasons for this license is to use the logo, the use of the Marriage Encounter name, the use of the weekend outline, to maintain fidelity and quality of all weekends, and to be the focal point for all Lutherans interested in Marriage Encounter as a faith expression. International Lutheran Marriage Encounter and the formal corporate body, Call To Be Family, is legally separate and independent from Worldwide Marriage Encounter other than by obligation to operate within the agreements of the license.
- E. Relationship to the Lutheran Church** – Lutheran Marriage Encounter has no legal, financial or formal working relationship with any Synod or organization of the Lutheran Church, but seeks to “strengthen and renew the Lutheran Church” by achieving its mission and vision.

III. NORTH AMERICAN REGIONAL BOARD

A. Statement of Purpose

1. To share the vision of Lutheran Marriage Encounter.
2. To provide financial accountability and an operating budget.
3. To organize itself into Districts.
4. To provide authority to set policies of the weekend.
5. To coordinate financial and human resources among Districts.
6. To provide leadership and presenting couple training.
7. To oversee the integrity of the weekend.
8. To provide communication with International Council, NAR Districts, Worldwide Marriage Encounter, and other faith expressions of Marriage Encounter through the WWME Interfaith Board.
9. To ratify By-law changes.

- B. REGIONAL BOARD.** The Regional Board is composed of the Regional Lay Contact Couple and the Regional Clergy Contact Couple (hereafter called the Regional Executive Team) and the District Executive Team from each District in the Region as set forth in Section II of the By-Laws.

- C. REGIONAL EXECUTIVE TEAM.** The North American Region shall elect one Regional Executive Lay Couple and one Regional Executive Clergy Couple. These couples are primarily responsible for the administration of their Region. The Regional Executive Team will determine which among them will serve as the President and Vice President of the corporation. These couples will represent the Region on the ILME Council and will also

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represent the Region in the relationship with Worldwide Marriage Encounter and at meetings of the WWME Interfaith Board. The term of office is one three-year term with no elected couple serving more than one consecutive term. For purposes of consecutive terms, a term of ten (10) months or less will not be considered a term of office. Their term of office will start with the conclusion of the Regional Board meeting where their election takes place or on conclusion of the International Council meeting or WWME Interfaith Board meeting of that year, whichever is later, but no later than September 1 of that year. The Regional Contact Couples (Lay and Clergy) and the District Contact Couples (Lay and Clergy) will each have one vote (one vote per couple) in the election. The voting process as defined in paragraph III.D of these By-laws shall be used to select the Regional Executive Couples. Both Lay and Clergy Regional Executive couples must be presenting couples, the lay couple being chosen from the third-set presenting couples. If this is not possible, they may be chosen from current or past District Contact Couples. Both couples must reside in the North American Region.

- D. VOTING.** The NAR Regional Board shall strive to operate by consensus. Staff members and guests attending meetings of the Regional Board shall have voice but no vote and will not be polled for consensus in the proceedings. When voting is necessary each District Couple present at the meeting will have one vote per couple (no absentee voting). Except in the case of elections, the Regional Executive Couple not chairing the meeting shall also have one vote per couple to break a tie. Election voting will occur by written secret ballot, one vote per couple eligible to vote. The out-going Regional Executive Team and the District Executive Teams are eligible to vote in elections if they are present at the election meeting. In order for a couple to be elected, they must receive more than 50% of the votes eligible to be cast. In the event that no couple receives a majority of the votes in a ballot, the couple with the fewest votes will be eliminated and another vote taken. Couples receiving no votes shall also be eliminated. In the event of a tie vote for a couple to be eliminated, all couples will continue to remain eligible and a re-vote will be taken after a short interval for reflection and prayer.
- E. MEETINGS.** The Regional Board shall normally meet two times a year when and as it determines. The Regional Executive Team may call additional meetings. Special meetings can also be called by petition of four member couples.
- F. QUORUMS.** Regional Board Meetings will be chaired by the Regional Executive Team. A quorum for any meeting will be all Districts represented by at least one member couple.
- G. ATTENDANCE.** Regional Board members are expected to be faithful in attendance at Board meetings. If personal priorities prevent this, the Board members should re-evaluate their membership and participation.
- H. VACANCIES.** Any vacancy in one of the Regional Executive Team positions will be filled by vote of the Regional Board to fill the position for the remainder of a term. Time served to fill a vacancy will not count as a term unless it is for longer than ten (10) months.

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The Regional Executive Team may appoint members of the NAR Staff and replace them as they see fit.

- I. TITLES.** The official title of each member is District Lay Contact Couple or District Clergy Contact Couple.
- J. APPOINTMENTS.** The Regional Executive Team may define staff positions as needed and may recruit and appoint couples to serve in those positions with the approval of the Regional board. As a minimum, appointments shall include a Secretary Couple and a Finance Couple. The Regional Executive Team is responsible to supervise the activities of all couples appointed to staff positions. The Regional Executive Team may choose to discontinue staff positions or remove a couple in a staff position as they see necessary.
- K. SECRETARY COUPLE.** There shall be a standing position of Regional Secretary Couple appointed by the Regional Executive Team and confirmed by the Regional Board. The Regional Secretary Couple will be the recorder for the Regional Board meetings and perform other tasks as outlined by the Regional Executive Team. The Secretary Couple will be one of the Registered representatives of the corporation.
- L. FINANCE COUPLE.** The Regional Executive Team shall appoint a couple for the position of Regional Financial Couple for confirmation by the Regional Board. This couple shall serve as the Treasurer of the corporation.
- M. PROCEDURES.** The Regional Board meetings shall be conducted using rules of order appropriate to the Region. All issues other than Regional Team elections, amending the By-laws, or those legally required for a corporation will be decided by consensus.
- N. EXCEPTIONS.** The Regional Board shall be allowed to make temporary and/or permanent exceptions to established procedures as they apply to areas outside established Districts but within the Region whenever cultural differences or special circumstances warrant this. The appropriate District Board may make exceptions within existing Districts. Consistency in the weekend and the spirit of the weekend shall be maintained.
- O. STANDING COMMITTEES.**
 - 1. The Regional Executive Team shall appoint standing committees of the Regional Board.
 - 2. The Regional Executive Team shall be ex-officio members of all standing committees.

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IV. DISTRICT BOARD

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

1. To share the vision of the Regional Board.
2. To provide financial accountability to the Region.
3. To coordinate and facilitate weekends.
4. To recruit and develop presenting couples and leadership.
5. To coordinate financial and human resources within the District.
6. To organize itself into Areas.
7. To develop community support systems.
8. To implement decisions of the Regional Board.
9. To carry needs and opportunities of Districts and Areas to the Regional Board.

B. DISTRICT BOARD. The District Board is composed of the District Lay Contact Couple and the District Clergy Contact Couple (referred to as the District Executive Team) and the Area Lay Contact Couple and the Area Clergy Contact Couple representing each Area in a District as set forth in Section II of the By-Laws.

C. DISTRICT EXECUTIVE TEAM. Each District shall elect a District Lay Contact Couple and a District Clergy Contact Couple. These couples are primarily responsible for the administration of their District and they represent the District on the Regional Board. The term of office is one three-year term with no elected couple serving more than one consecutive term. For purposes of consecutive term, a term of 10 months or less will not be considered a term of office. The term of office will start with the conclusion of the District Board meeting where their election takes place. These couples shall be elected in a representative manner selected by that District. The District Contact Couples (Lay and Clergy) and the Area Contact Couples (Lay and Clergy) will each have one vote in the election. Both District Lay and Clergy Contact Couples must be presenting couples. The lay couple must be chosen from the third-set presenting couples or any current or past Area Contact Couple in a District who have served on a District Board for at least two years when their term begins. Both couples shall be actively participating in an area of that District.

D. VOTING. District Boards shall operate by consensus except for the election of a new District Executive Team. Staff members and guests attending meeting of the District Board shall have voice but will not be polled for consensus in the proceedings, which shall be limited to the District Executive Team and Area Lay and Clergy Contact Couples. For elections the incumbent District Executive Team and each Area Lay and Clergy Contact Couple will have one vote per couple. The District Board may establish the voting process they wish to follow; this must be done at a prior District Board meeting.

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- E. MEETINGS.** The district Board shall normally meet two times per year when and as it determines. Additional meetings may be called by the District Executive Team. Special meetings can also be called by petition by four member couples.
- F. QUORUMS.** District Board meetings will be chaired by the District Executive Team. A quorum for any meeting will be at least five couples and three Areas represented. The District Contact Couples can be counted for the quorum.
- G. ATTENDANCE.** District Board members are expected to be faithful in attendance at District meetings. If personal priorities prevent this, the members should re-evaluate their membership and participation.
- H. VACANCIES.** Any vacancy in one of the District Executive Team positions will be filled by vote of the District Board to fill the position for the remainder of a term. Time served to fill a vacancy will not count as a term unless it is for longer than ten (10) months. The District Executive Team may appoint members of the District Staff and replace them as they see fit.
- I. TITLES.** The official title of each board member is Area Lay Contact Couple or Area Clergy Contact Couple.
- J. APPOINTMENTS.** The District Executive Team may define staff positions as needed and may recruit and appoint couples to serve in those positions with the approval of the District Board. As a minimum, appointments shall include a Finance Couple. The District Executive Team is responsible to supervise the activities of all couples appointed to staff positions. The District Executive Team may elect to discontinue staff positions or remove a couple in a staff position as they see necessary.
- K. FINANCE COUPLE.** The District Executive Team shall appoint a couple for the position of District Finance Couple. The District Finance Couple shall follow financial procedures established by the Regional Finance Couple. A District Finance Couple may not continue to serve in that capacity if the Regional Finance Couple in consultation with the District Executive Team requests they relinquish their position.
- L. PROCEDURES.** The District Board meetings shall be conducted using rules of order appropriate to the District. All other issues other than elections for the District Executive Team will be decided by consensus.
- M. EXCEPTIONS.** The District Board shall be allowed to make temporary and/or permanent exceptions to established procedures as they apply to areas outside established Areas but within the District whenever cultural differences or special circumstances warrant this. The appropriate Area Board may make exceptions within existing Areas. Consistency in the weekend and the spirit of the weekend shall be maintained.

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N. STANDING COMMITTEES.

1. The District Executive Team shall appoint standing committees of the District Board.
2. The District Executive Team shall be ex-officio members of all standing committees.

V. AREAS

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

1. To present and/or promote Weekends.
2. To provide and/or support community experiences.
3. To structure itself to accomplish the tasks suggested in the Community Handbook.
4. To provide financial accountability to the District.
5. To communicate with couples in the Area and District.
6. To carry needs and opportunities of the Area to the District Board.
7. To support and fulfill the needs of the ministry as established by the District and NAR Boards

B. DEFINITIONS AND EXPECTATIONS:

1. An Area is a group of encountered couples within a defined geographical boundary that regularly meet together to present and/or promote weekends and support the ministry of Lutheran Marriage Encounter. Boundaries may be altered and/or an Area may be deactivated by the district Executive team. After prayerful consideration and coordination with the Area community, all reasonable effort shall be made to keep an Area functioning and viable with a sense of family.
2. Each Area will establish an Area Lay Contact Couple in a manner to be determined within the Area. The Area Lay Contact Couple need not be a Presenting Couple, but must have attended a weekend within the prior five (5) years or during the first year of their term of office.
3. Each Area will establish an Area Clergy Contact Couple preferably from the weekend-ready Clergy Presenting Couple community within the Area. If there are no weekend-ready Clergy Presenting Couples within the Area who are able or willing to serve, the position may be filled by an encountered Clergy Couple, otherwise the position shall be declared vacant.
4. The Area Lay and Clergy Contact Couples provide leadership in the Area and will represent the Area on the District Board. If there is no Clergy Contact Couple, the Area Lay Contact Couple will represent the Area on the District Board.

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5. The District Executive Team may decide how or whether an Outreach Area is represented on the District Board.
6. An Area that has at least four (4) presenting couples (including Clergy) with weekend-ready talks covering all weekend talks may schedule weekends as they are able to support them from within their Area Presenting Couples. Otherwise, weekends must be coordinated with the District Executive Team or their designees (e.g., District Presenting Couple Coordinator).
7. In all cases, the District Executive Team shall have final say as to whether a scheduled weekend may proceed. The District Executive Team will prayerfully consult with the Area Leadership to consider compelling reasons to proceed or to cancel before making a final decision
8. If neither Lay nor Clergy Contact Couple are a presenting couple and there is no APCC in the Area then the DPCC will serve as the APCC, or the DPCC may designate an APCC to serve in that capacity.

VI. REGIONAL FINANCE COUPLE

- A. All financial actions of this corporation will be conducted under the auspices of the Regional Board.
- B. The Regional Finance Couple will maintain the corporate funds for the Region. The Regional Finance Couple will be assisted by the Canadian Finance Couple (appointed by the Regional Finance Couple) and the District Finance Couples, who are appointed by the District Executive Team of the respective Districts. No Canadian or District Finance Couple shall continue to serve in that capacity without the continued endorsement of the Regional Finance Couple.
- C. The Regional Finance Couple serve at the pleasure of the Regional Executive Team. There is no limit on how long a couple may serve in this capacity.
- D. If any Area should dissolve, all funds and property are to be consolidated into the District. If any District should dissolve, all funds and property are to be consolidated to the Region. If the Region should dissolve all funds and property are to be disbursed among the remaining ILME Regions or disposed of as the ILME Council shall decide, with any proceeds to be disbursed among the remaining ILME Regions.
- E. The Regional Finance Couple, the Canadian Finance Couple and the District Finance Couples will be bonded at corporation expense.

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- F.** An independent financial review of Regional and Canadian records will be conducted on a triennial basis by qualified individual selected by the Regional board at the recommendation of the Regional Executive Team. An independent financial review of District records will be conducted on a triennial basis by qualified individual selected by the District Executive Team with the approval of the Regional Finance Couple. An independent audit will be conducted when there is a change of Regional, District or Canadian Finance Couples.

- G.** Copies of Financial statements will be distributed to the Regional Board.

VII. POLICIES

- A.** Lutheran Marriage Encounter weekends are to strengthen the marriage between a man and a woman and will be the same as the Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekends with the same high quality and standards.
 - 1. There will be no additions, deletions or changes from the outline except those pertaining to theology and Lutheran traditions.
 - 2. A worship service and the Sacrament of Holy Communion will be presented by the weekend clergy couple on all Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends in accordance with the communion statement read on Friday evening of the weekend. The elements used on the weekend for the communion service will be bread and wine, with alternatives recognized within the Lutheran tradition.

- B.** For presenting couples, both husband and wife must be communing members of a Lutheran Church.

- C.** While it is desired that each Weekend have 60% or more Lutherans, it is recognized that special circumstances may make it impossible to do this in every case. When this is so, the number of couples on the weekends given in that Area, averaged over the year, will be a minimum of sixty (60) percent Lutheran.

- D.** Recognizing the broader thrust of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, to strengthen and renew the couple relationship within their denominational community, members of other denominations may be involved in all capacities except where presenting couples are required.

- E.** Contact couples from an Area must be Lutheran and preferably a presenting couple. The District Executive Team may grant a temporary exception to these requirements.

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- F.** No statement shall be made to exclude non-Lutherans during the course of the weekend or any Encounter function. Lutheran couples will be encouraged to invite Lutheran couples for the continued growth of Lutheran Marriage Encounter.
- G.** All money collected in the United States from registrations, weekends or donations shall be forwarded to the appropriate District Financial Couple. All money collected in Canada from registrations, weekends or donations shall be forwarded to the Canadian Financial Couple. Each local Area shall have a petty cash fund for that Area which shall be replenished as needed by the District Finance Couple (or Canadian Financial Couple in Canada). The Area petty cash accounts will be the responsibility of the Area Finance Couple. All financial transactions by the Regional Finance Couple, the Canadian Financial Couple, the District Finance Couple, and the Area Finance Couple shall be in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Regional Board. The amount of the registration fee and the amount to be quoted in the Finance Talk on the weekend shall be determined by the Regional Board.
- H.** Presenting couples must be willing to accept the communion statement that is read on the weekend and are expected to participate in the Sacrament of Holy Communion on the Weekend.

VIII. CHANGES TO THE BY-LAWS

The Regional Board may propose or receive proposals for changes in By-Laws. A two-thirds (2/3) majority vote is required to change the By-Laws.

IX. LUTHERAN ENGAGED ENCOUNTER AFFILIATION

Lutheran Marriage Encounter will maintain an affiliation with Lutheran Engaged Encounter for the purpose of mutual assistance and coordination. However, the two organizations will remain financially and administratively independent of each other. The president couple of Lutheran Engaged Encounter may be invited to one Regional Board meeting per year (optionally at Region expense) to provide an update of the status of Lutheran Engaged Encounter programs and to enhance continued mutual assistance.

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**LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER
POLICY STATEMENT REGARDING THE SACRAMENT OF
HOLY COMMUNION ON WEEKENDS**

- A. Worship is an integral part of the Weekend and shall be celebrated as a part of Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends.
- B. Holy Communion is a normal part of the Lutheran Marriage Encounter worship service except as provided for in paragraph C.
- C. Area Lay and Clergy Contact Couples are empowered to decide that Holy Communion will not be offered on a Weekend if, in their judgment, it presents a barrier to couples attending a Weekend.
- D. On Weekends where Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the following statement shall be read on Friday evening:

“The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated Sunday afternoon at the close of the Weekend. We, as Lutherans, believe the Sacrament gives us the opportunity to draw together with our spouse and with one another in a close fellowship around Christ’s Body and Blood. We further believe the Sacrament is Christ present for you in and with the bread and wine. Its purpose is to forgive sin, to renew life and to assure you of salvation. It is offered to those who are baptized, repentant of their sins and wrongs, who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and who believe in the Presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

“If you do not wish to commune, we will certainly honor your desire, however, we invite you to share in the warmth and closeness as we gather around Christ’s altar.”

[The following is optional at the discretion of the Weekend Clergy couple.] “The communion service is conducted under the auspices of a Lutheran Congregation.”

- E. The sacrament of Holy Communion may also be celebrated at International, Regional and District family reunions, and at other events with discretion. It is recommended that communion not be celebrated at Weekend Renewals, Veteran Renewals and social activities.