

---

# ELCA Style Guide

---

Revised February 2022



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

# ELCA Style Guide

## Alphabetized Word List

The primary style manual for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is the current edition of the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook. The primary dictionary is the current edition of Merriam-Webster's Dictionary. When alternate spellings are available in the dictionary, the first reference is used. Don't assume that an entry in this word list implies a difference with Merriam-Webster's or the AP Stylebook.

### NOTES:

- Use only one space between sentences and after a colon (*except* in biblical citations where there is no space following the colon).
- In general, italic type is discouraged. It is used in this guide, as it is in AP Stylebook, for emphasis and clarity.
- An entry marked “preferred” indicates the style that should be used if possible. If an alternative is needed, justification for the choice should be provided to the editorial specialist.
- Resources of a highly *academic* nature that include footnotes should be edited per Chicago Manual of Style ([chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)).
- Since texts prepared for liturgical use often quote or paraphrase Bible passages, texts in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* resources employ a more economical use of added style characteristics such as capitalization, so these texts are consonant with the style of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Quotations from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* resources will reproduce the style of those resources. For consistency, newly developed or adapted texts for liturgical use normally follow *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* style.

### Abba

Aramaic for “father”; do not italicize.

### acronyms

Generally *do not use* acronyms, *exceptions* are ELCA, acronyms in common usage per Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and for versions of the Bible. Spell out the name of this church in first reference with acronym in parentheses following:

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is a church body whose national offices are in Chicago. The ELCA has over 10,000 congregations.

It's OK to use MYLE and the tAble for the respective ELCA youth events.

*see* Appendix 1 for acronyms for versions of the Bible.

### accompaniment

Describes the way God walks with us and the way the ELCA therefore walks with and works among Christian communities in other countries, as well as work in local communities.

### A.D./B.C.; C.E./B.C.E.

*see* B.C./A.D.

### Administrative Team

Oversees and coordinates the work of the churchwide organization, engages in strategic planning and monitors the implementation of the Plan for Mission and the operational plan for the biennium. It coordinates the work of cross-unit teams and provides a forum for addressing leadership development and discussing interdependent relationships, highly confidential issues and other issues raised by the presiding bishop.

### adolescent

*Do not use*; use boy, girl, young adult or youth.

## **adult**

A person who has reached age 18; any reference to adult women as “girls” or adult men as “boys” is unacceptable.

*see also* boy; girl; man; woman; young adult; youth

## **advent/Advent**

Capitalize when referring to the Advent season; but lowercase for “the advent of our Lord.”

## **affect, effect**

*Most common usage:*

“Affect” (verb) means “to influence”:

The sudden snowstorm affected their travel plans.

“Effect” (noun) means “a result or consequence.”

The sudden snowstorm had no effect on their travel plans.

*Rare usage:*

“Effect” as a verb means “to bring about” or “to cause.”

The new mayor hoped to effect change in the economy.

## **affirmation of baptism/Affirmation of Baptism**

Lowercase when used as a general term:

After the hymn of the day comes the affirmation of baptism.

Capitalize when referring to the title of the liturgical rite, usually including a page citation for the service:

Note how the laying on of hands is done in Affirmation of Baptism.

*see* baptism

## **Africa/African**

Use only when referring to the entire continent; otherwise, refer to a particular country, culture or people.

## **African American (adj.)**

Don’t hyphenate. The usage of the cultural-ethnic background of people who were transplanted to the Americas (by immigration or by slave trade) is preferred, rather than referencing skin color. This usage affirms the rich ethnic traditions from which people have come rather than simply indicating skin color or a perceived skin color. Since members of some ethnic groups use different terms when referring to themselves, if possible ask them how they would like to be identified.

## **African Descent Ministry Strategy**

Capitalize in this usage; lowercase “descent” in general references to individuals of African descent.

Hyphenate if used as an adjective:

These are values of the African-descent community.

## **age**

At age 18, everyone is referred to as an adult.

*Avoid* using the terms “boy” and “girl” for anyone older than 12.

“Older adult” is *preferred* over “elderly” or “senior citizen”; but their use in generic phrases that don’t refer to specific individuals is acceptable: “senior citizen discount,” “a home for the elderly.”

*Always* use numerals; hyphenate ages used as adjectives:

A 5-year-old girl painted it. The book was written for 3-year-olds.

*Avoid* using “teenager,” “adolescent” and “kids.”

*see also* adult; boy; girl; man; woman; young adult; youth

## **AIDS**

Acronym for acquired immunodeficiency sndrome—all caps, no periods. Use “people with AIDS” or “people living with AIDS”; *do not use* “AIDS victim”; when reference includes family and friends, use “people affected by AIDS.”

Use “HIV and AIDS” *not* “HIV/AIDS.”

*see also* HIV

## **Alaska Native**

Indigenous people of Alaska. Since members of some ethnic groups use different terms when referring to themselves, if possible ask them how they would like to be identified.

*Do not use* “Native Alaskan.”

## **Alcoholics Anonymous**

AA is acceptable after first reference; note the absence of punctuation.

## **Aleut**

One of numerous Alaska Native people; Indigenous people of the Aleutian Islands off the southwest coast of Alaska.

*see also* Alaska Native

## **Allah**

Arabic for “God.”

## **alleluia/Alleluia!**

capitalize only when used as an interjection.

## **All Saints Day**

No apostrophe.

## **all together, altogether**

“All together” is an adjective and means “gathered in one place”:

The Old and New Testaments were printed all together in one volume.

“Altogether” is an adverb meaning “wholly” or “completely”:

The stories were altogether true.

Or “in all”:

There were four stories altogether.

Or “on the whole,” “in the main”:

Altogether, the story seemed probable.

## **almighty God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **altar**

The table or stand used for sacred purposes in worship.

## **ambo**

A single reading stand for the proclamation of the readings and preaching; often used instead of “lectern” in liturgical settings.

## **America**

*Do not use* when “United States” is meant.

## **American(s)**

Popular usage, even outside the United States, often refers to U.S. citizens as “Americans,” but they aren’t the only Americans or, strictly speaking, the only North Americans. Be as clear as possible in the reference, such as “people of the United States” or “citizens of [country].”

## **American Indian**

Indigenous people of North America, except for those identified as Alaska Native people; refer to a specific nation when possible:

He is a Hopi commissioner.

Since members of some ethnic groups use different terms when referring to themselves, if possible ask for clarification.

## **amid**

*Not* amidst.

## **among**

*Not* “amongst.”

## **among, between**

In general, “among” introduces more than two items:

Jesus distributed the bread among the men, women and children gathered.

“Between” introduces only two items:

I am between a rock and a hard place.

## **and/or**

*Do not use* this device or shortcut, as it damages the clarity of a sentence and often leads to confusion or ambiguity; instead offer more explanation as to the options involved in the reference.

## **annunciation/Annunciation**

Capitalize only when referring to the festival on March 25 that commemorates the announcement of the incarnation to Mary: “The Annunciation of Our Lord.”

## **anti-**

In general, hyphenate after this prefix, although there are many exceptions.

*see* AP Stylebook entry for more information

*see also* prefix

## **anti-Christ/Antichrist**

Someone or something opposed to Christ is “anti-Christ” (adjective). “Antichrist” (proper name) refers to the individual who, according to the Bible, will challenge Christ.

## **anti-racism**

## **anti-Semitic/anti-Semitism**

*Note* capitalization

**anyone, any one; everyone, every one; someone, some one**

When the emphasis is on “any,” “every” or “some” and when the person/people is/are thought of in general terms, write as one word:

Everyone who is baptized ....

When the focus is on each person and the emphasis is on individuality, write as two words:

Every one of the baptized ....

**apocalypse/Apocalypse**

Capitalize only when referring to the book of Revelation or the Apocalypse of John.

**Apocrypha**

Jewish intertestamental writings; the books that are in the Septuagint or Vulgate versions of the Bible, but not included in the Jewish or Protestant canons.

**apocryphal/Apocryphal**

Lowercase when referring to a story that may not be true; capitalize only when referring to the Apocrypha.

**apologist/Apologist(s)**

Capitalize only when referring to someone who was of this group of second-century Christian theologians, such as Justin Martyr.

**Apology, the**

Place in quotation marks when referring to the work by Justin Martyr or Plato; do not use quotation marks when referring to the Apology to the Augsburg Confession.

**apostle/Apostle(s)**

“The apostle Paul,” “this apostle”; but “Apostle Paul.”

**Apostles’ Creed, the**

Capitalize with an apostrophe; lowercase “creed” when using the short form in subsequent references: “the creed.”

**apostolic/Apostolic**

Lowercase “apostolic church,” “apostolic council,” “apostolic greetings,” “apostolic succession”; but “the Apostolic Fathers.”

**appraise, apprise**

“Appraise” is to evaluate:

Let me appraise the situation in the assembly plenary.

“Apprise” is to inform:

I will apprise the secretary of the mood of the plenary.

**article/Article**

Capitalize when referring to individual articles of the creeds: “the Third Article”; but “this article.”

**as, like**

Use “as” as a conjunction to introduce clauses:

Jane plays cello as a musician should.

Use “like” as a preposition for comparing nouns and pronouns, which requires a direct object:

Jane plays like a musician.

**ascension/Ascension**

Lowercase “Christ’s ascension”; capitalize only when referring to the Thursday, 40 days after Easter, that commemorates Christ’s ascent into heaven: “Ascension Day.”

**Ash Wednesday**

Capitalize.

**Asian**

Use for people from countries in Asia; *do not use* “Asiatic” or “Oriental” when referring to people; whenever possible, make references to the specific country:

Filipinos are people from the Philippines.

**Asian American**

Do not hyphenate (*exception* to AP Stylebook); U.S. citizens of Asian descent.

**assembly/Assembly**

Capitalize when using the full name of the event:

I attended the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Lowercase if the full title is not being used:

During the assembly we sat in the visitors’ section.

“Assembly” is also used when referring to the worshipping congregation with its ministers:

The assembly rose to sing the hymn.

*see also* Churchwide Assembly; Synod Assembly (lowercase churchwide assembly/ies and synod assembly/ies when used in a general way)

**assisting minister**

Lowercase.

**associate/s in ministry (*do not use*)**

Title for associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses is now “*deacon*.”

*see also* deacon

**assumption/Assumption**

Capitalize only when referring to the Aug. 15 festival on the Roman Catholic calendar: “The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

**Athanasian Creed, the**

Capitalize; but lowercase “creed” when using the short form in subsequent references: “the creed.”

**atonement**

Lowercase.

**ATTN:**

*Note* preferred style.

**Augsburg Confession**

*Do not* italicize or enclose in quotation marks.

**a while, awhile**

When used with “for,” write as two words:

She will travel for a while.

But She will travel awhile.

**Baal/baals**

Reference to any of numerous Canaanite and Phoenician local deities; singular, without article, usually capitalize:

The people went out to worship Baal.

plural form is lowercase: “baals” or “baalim”

**baby Jesus**

Lowercase “baby.”

**baptism/Baptism**

Baptism is the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism; capitalize when referring to the Christian sacrament or rite, usually accompanied with a page citation for the service: “Holy Baptism,” “Sacrament of Holy Baptism”; lowercase when used as a general term: “baptism by fire,” “remembering my baptism,” “Jesus’ baptism”:

Many Christians practice infant baptism.

**baptismal, baptismal candle, baptismal garment**

Any such adjectival usage of “baptismal” is lowercase.

**baptismal font**

*Prefer* simply “font.”

**baptized, the**

Lowercase.

**B.C./A.D.; B.C.E./C.E.**

B.C. is abbreviation for “before Christ,” and should come after the year; A.D. is abbreviation for “anno Domini,” “in the year of our Lord,” and should come before the year; B.C.E. is abbreviation for “before the common era”; C.E. is abbreviation for “common era”;

*Prefer* usage of B.C./A.D.; however B.C.E./C.E. are acceptable to use especially in an inter-religious situation where this usage is more hospitable than B.C./A.D.

**beatitude(s), Beatitudes**

Capitalize only when referring to Matthew 5:1–12 and Luke 6:20–26; but “Jesus’ beatitudes.”

**between**

*see* among, between

**biannual, biennial**

“biannual” means twice a year:

The committee meets biannually.

*Prefer* “semiannual”

“biennial” means every two years:

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly met biennially.

## **Bible/Holy Bible, the**

In general, capitalize; but lowercase when used as a nonreligious term:

My dictionary is my bible.

*see also* books of the Bible

## **Bible, version of the**

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is to be used for all biblical references; if it is necessary, in a particular context, to quote from another version, reasoning for this deviation from the standard should be provided when the document is submitted to Strategic Communications for editorial review as well as an indication of which version is being used.

*see* biblical text references

*see also* Appendix 1 for appropriate credit lines for various versions of the Bible

## **biblical (adj.)**

Lowercase.

## **biblical quotations**

If a biblical quotation consists of only one verse, it can be credited by simply putting the abbreviation for the version of the Bible used in small caps after the citation; if the resource contains numerous biblical references, a credit line should be added on the copyright page of the resource crediting the appropriate version used.

*see also* New Revised Standard Version, the

*see* Appendix 1 for appropriate credit lines

## **biblical text citations**

- Never put a space after the colon in a biblical citation: Psalm 23:1.
- Complete chapters cited within a body of copy may use chapter number only: Matthew 5; at other times (for example, when listing a Bible basis), list the complete citation: Matthew 5:1-48.
- Arabic numbers (*not* Roman numerals) are used for numbered books: 2 Thessalonians; if a sentence starts with a book name, spell out the number:  
Second Thessalonians begins with ....
- If a reference to the Bible translation follows a verse citation, it is placed in small caps without a comma: Matthew 13:34 KJV; references to Bible translation within copy should be spelled out upon first usage; subsequently the appropriate acronym may be used.
- Examples of biblical references:  
It is then we remember the words, "There is the Lamb of God" (John 1:29 TEV).  
But Paul and Silas did not give up hope, singing and praying even in prison (verse 25) or (v. 25).  
"And I will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).
- Examples of punctuation within the citation for biblical text references:  
Matthew 13:34  
Matthew 13:34-35 (use a hyphen)  
Matthew 13:34, 48, 56 (comma and space between nonconsecutive verses)  
Matthew 5; 8 (semicolon to separate whole, nonconsecutive chapters)  
Matthew 13:34; 14:7 (semicolon and space to separate chapters that have verse references)  
Acts 2:4; Matthew 13:34 (semicolon and space to separate citations from different books of the Bible)
- The following examples make use of the en dash and are an *exception* to the AP Stylebook; they follow the rules set forth by the style guide of the Society for Biblical Literature  
Matthew 13:34 – 14:7 [en dash for a passage that encompasses parts of two chapters];  
Matthew 5 – 7 [en dash to separate whole, consecutive chapters]

Matthew 4:8 – 5:48 [when reference ends with the end of a chapter, cite ending verse number to avoid a citation like Matthew 4:8 – 5]

*see also* books of the Bible

*see* dash

## **bisexual**

No hyphen.

*see also* LGBTQ and LGBTQIA+

## **bishop**

- In first reference, lowercase:  
Closing remarks were given by the Rev. Janice Schulz, bishop of the ELCA Central States Synod.
- When the title comes before the name, capitalize title:  
Bishop Janice Schulz.
- *Do not use* both “the Rev.” and the title before the person’s name, for example, *do not use* “the Rev. Bishop Joseph Anderson.”
- The title of the chief executive officer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is “presiding bishop”; capitalize when used with a name:  
Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton led worship.  
The name of the office is “Office of the Presiding Bishop”
- For questions about titles of leaders of other denominations, consult with staff of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Affairs or Office of the Secretary.

## **Black (adj.)**

Use the capitalized term as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense: “Black Americans,” “historic Black churches”; *prefer* to reference ethnic background rather than skin color.

## **blind**

Use “people who are blind,” “people who are visually impaired,” “blind people”; *do not use* “the blind.”  
*see also* disability

## **blog**

Short for “Web log”; internet communication with regular updates (“posts”) typically displayed in reverse chronological order and maintained by one person.

## **body and blood of Christ**

Elements of the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

## **body of Christ, the**

Refers to the church universal or the church catholic.

*see* catholic

## **book**

*Do not* capitalize when referring to a book of the Bible:

This story is in the book of Daniel.

Delete “book” if this removal is not disruptive to the meaning:

This story is in Daniel.

**Book of Faith Initiative**

Note capitalization style

**books of the Bible**

to avoid confusion for the reader, *always* spell out names of the books of the Bible in running text  
*see* AP Stylebook “Bible” for approved standard names.

**boy**

Use only for those under age 12

*see* adult; man; young adult; youth

**brandmark**

The official, unifying graphic identity of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America includes three elements: the emblem, the name of this church and the tagline. The brandmark does not always include the tagline, but it must always include the name and the emblem. Brandmark resources can be found at [ELCA.org/en/Resources/ELCA-Branding](http://ELCA.org/en/Resources/ELCA-Branding); consult this link for approved usage of the brandmark.

*see also* emblem; tagline; sub-brand

**Burma**

*Prefer* “Myanmar.”

**bulleted lists**

*see* lists

**calendar, the liturgical**

List of church seasons, Sundays, festivals, lesser festivals, commemorations and occasions; lowercase.

**cancer**

*see* disease

**canon, canonical (adj.)**

Lowercase.

**catechetical**

Lowercase.

**catechism/Catechism**

Lowercase except when used as part of a title: “the Small Catechism,” “the Large Catechism.”

**catechumen**

Youth or adult preparing for baptism and first communion.

**catechumenate**

Process through which youth or adults prepare for baptism and first communion; may also refer to the group of catechumens.

**catholic/Catholic**

Lowercase when referring to the universal church:

I believe in ... the holy, catholic church.

Capitalize when it refers to a specific Catholic Church such as the “Roman Catholic Church”; or “Eastern Catholic Church.”

**Catholic Reformation**

*see* Counter-Reformation

**C.E./B.C.E.**

*see* B.C./A.D.

**centuries**

Reference to a particular century in a sentence should be lowercase and spelled out for numbers less than 10, for example, “the second century,” “the 19th century.” Reference should be hyphenated if used as an adjective: “20th-century music.”

*see also* dates; decades

**chair**

May also use “convener,” “presider,” “moderator,” “coordinator” or “leader.”

*Exception to AP Stylebook: do not use* “chairman” or “chairwoman.”

**chalice and paten**

*Prefer* “cup and plate” for simplicity or clarification.

**Chanukah**

*Preferred* spelling is “Hanukkah.”

**chaplain**

On first reference, “Chaplain Randall Whitmore, U.S. Army” is acceptable; rank ought not to be used as a title, but if included, write: “Lt. Randall Whitmore, chaplain in the U.S. Army.”

**chapter**

In parentheses or notes, may use “chap. 2,” “chaps. 2–4”; otherwise, write out in running text

**Chicano**

*Avoid*; use “Latino” instead.

*see* Latino

**chosen people**

Lowercase.

**chrism**

Oil used for anointing at baptism.

**Christ child**

Lowercase “child,” but may be capitalized when used alone in referring to Jesus if the meaning is otherwise unclear.

## **Christendom**

Capitalize.

## **Christian**

Capitalize.

## **Christian church**

*Note* that “church” is lowercase.

## **Christianity**

Capitalize.

## **Christlike**

Capitalize.

## **Christmas cycle, the**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Christmas Day**

Capitalize.

## **Christmas Eve**

Capitalize.

## **Christmas season, the**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Christ the King**

Festival of the church year.

## **church/Church**

- Lowercase in instances such as “the early church,” “the Lutheran church,” “the church (building),” “church founders,” “church school”
- *Do not use* “church” when you mean “congregation:  
Our congregation has many young members.  
*not* “Our church has many young members.”
- Capitalize only when referring to a specific church: “St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church”; or to the corporate title of a church body: “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” “Roman Catholic Church.”
- In references to or as an alternative for “ELCA,” use “this church”; usage of “our church” is also possible when used in a fundraising reference; *do not use* “the church.”
- When referring to the catholic (universal) church, “church” should be lowercased unless quoting an original source.

*see also* catholic/Catholic

## **church bodies**

Lowercase.

## **Church Council**

Use in reference to the Church Council of the ELCA only; if the context clearly indicates that the ELCA Church Council is meant, lowercase “council” may be used upon subsequent references.  
*see also* Congregation Council; Synod Council

## **churchwide (adj.)**

*Always* use as an adjective modifying another word; *never* use as a noun standing alone; *never* use “nationwide” or “national” to reference the territory of the ELCA since the Bahamas and the Caribbean are not a part of the United States.  
*see also* churchwide ministries, churchwide organization

## **Churchwide Assembly**

Capitalize when using the full title:

I attended the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

A churchwide assembly happens every three years.

Lowercase when only “assembly” is used:

Important decisions were made by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. During the assembly ....

## **churchwide ministries**

References the programs, ministries, resources, services and initiatives of the ELCA’s churchwide expression; treated as a singular, collective noun; may be used instead of “churchwide organization” to shift the focus from administration to mission.

## **churchwide office**

*Do not use*; reference should be to “churchwide organization” or “churchwide ministries.”

## **churchwide organization**

Lowercase; one of the three expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; this is the correct terminology for reference to the national and global ministries administrative offices of this church:

I work for the churchwide organization. I work at the Lutheran Center.

*Do not use* “I work at churchwide” or “I work at the ELCA.”

## **church year**

Lowercase.

## **city of David**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **civilized/uncivilized**

*Avoid*; use “traditional” or “cultural” instead, as in “traditional people,” “cultural practices.”

## **clergy**

As distinct from laity; use also “pastor,” “members of the clergy,” “ordained minister.”

*Avoid* “clergyman,” “clergywoman,” “clergyperson.”

## clergy titles

- In formal running text, on first reference, use “the Rev. Jane M. Doe” (*note* use of the person’s full name).
- In more informal text, may use “Jane Doe, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church.”
- In correspondence use “The Rev. Jane M. Doe” in the address, and “Dear Pastor Doe” in the salutation.
- “Pr.” is an acceptable abbreviation for “Pastor” in a list with names and titles.
- Lowercase “pastor” when used after the person’s name:  
The Rev. Jane M. Doe, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, presided at worship Sunday.
- Former ELCA bishops are referred to as simply “the Rev. Jane Doe”; they are not bishops for life.
- *Never* use “the Rev. Dr.” unless the doctorate is an earned degree.
- Using titles other than “pastor” for clergy of other denominations may be appropriate and preferred; consult with staff of Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Office of the Secretary if you have a question about the title of someone of another denomination

*see* AP Stylebook, “religious titles,” for usage

*see also* bishop

## co-

Hyphenate between this prefix and the word that follows when indicating occupation or status: “co-pastor,” “co-signer”; otherwise, do not hyphenate “coequal,” “coexist,” “cooperate,” “coordinate.”

## colon

Capitalize the word following a colon only if it is a proper noun *or begins a complete sentence*; one space follows the colon; no space after the colon in a biblical citation.

*see* AP Stylebook, “Punctuation”

## comma

- With dates: in full dates, a comma follows the year:  
On Nov. 8, 1998, the Committee on the Rightful Place of Commas will meet.  
When only the month and year are listed, don’t use a comma, as in “November 1998.”
- With Junior, Senior, II, III: no comma is used between the surname and these designations:  
Benjamin V. Washington Jr., executive assistant to the bishop, met with us.  
Joseph J. Olson III, executive assistant to the bishop, was absent.
- With states and countries: a comma follows the name of a state in city-state or city in city-country references in text:  
The meeting was held in Columbus, Ohio, at Trinity Lutheran Seminary.  
They visited Geneva, Switzerland, while on their vacation in Europe.

*see also* AP Stylebook, “comma”

## comma in a series

*see* serial punctuation

## commandment/Commandment(s)

Lowercase when referring to any general commandment:

That commandment is hard to keep.

Capitalize when referring to the Ten Commandments as a whole or to a specific one: “the First Commandment” or “the Commandments.”

## Commandment, the Great

As found in Matthew 22:37.

## **Commission, the Great**

As found in Matthew 28:19-20 or Mark 16:15.

## **communion/Communion**

Lowercase when used as a general term: “the communion of saints,” “my first communion.” Capitalize only when referring to the Christian sacrament of receiving the body and blood of Christ (usually includes a page citation for the rite being referenced: “Holy Communion,” “Sacrament of Holy Communion”).

## **complement, compliment**

“Complement” refers to something that completes or perfects another thing:

A dessert plate is a nice complement to a formal place setting.

“Compliment” is an approving remark:

She paid me a nice compliment about my new suit.

## **compline**

*see* night prayer

## **compose, comprise**

“Compose” means “to put together or create” or “to be made up of”:

Mozart was known to compose as early as age 5.

The task force was composed of both clergy and lay people.

“Comprise” means “to include”:

Before he died at 35, Mozart’s compositions would comprise over 40 symphonies.

## **confession/Confession**

Lowercase any creedal usage: “confessions of faith.” Capitalize when used as a short form for a specific document: “the Augsburg Confession,” “the Westminster Confession” or “Lutheran Confessions. Also capitalize when used as a title in a liturgical setting: “Confession and Forgiveness.”

## **confirmation**

Confirmation is the program that leads to Affirmation of Baptism; lowercase when used as a general term:

I am in my second year of confirmation class.

*see also* Affirmation of Baptism

## **congregation**

One of the three expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; *do not* refer to a “local congregation” as this is redundant.

*Note* references to “congregations of the ELCA” includes new mission starts.

## **congregation-based organizing/congregation-based community organizing**

Hyphenate; “faith-based community organizing” is also acceptable.

## **Congregation Council**

Capitalize when using as the complete, specific reference to this body; this is the correct name for the governing bodies of ELCA congregations, according to the ELCA constitution. May be lowercase when reference is a generic one for councils in congregations.

*Do not use* “church council” or “Congregational Council.”

## **consecration**

Lowercase

**contractions**

Avoid the use of contractions in *official* documents of this church.

**copyright**

The ELCA (not the unit) holds the copyright to any work produced by churchwide staff in the line of their job responsibilities; separately incorporated ministries of the ELCA may hold the copyright in their name:

Copyright © 20XX Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Copyright © 20XX Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**council**

Capitalize when referencing “Church Council” of the ELCA; lowercase when referring to it subsequently: “the council.” Follow a similar pattern for “Synod Council” and “Congregation Council.”

**Counter-Reformation**

Reform movement in the Roman Catholic Church following the Protestant Reformation; also called the Catholic Reformation.

**courtesy titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms.)**

Be consistent; either use courtesy titles for everyone or do not use at all; use “Mrs.” only if requested; *prefer* “Ms.” for all women.

**covenant/Covenant**

*Prefer* “books of the Old Testament.” Lowercase when used as a theological concept: “Mosaic covenant,” but capitalize as a synonym for books of the Old Testament: “Old Covenant.”

**creation**

Lowercase.

**creator/Creator**

Capitalize when used as a synonym for God or part of a title in direct address: “our Creator”; otherwise lowercase: “God, creator of the universe.”

**credit lines, copyright language**

*see* Appendix 1 for appropriate credit lines to use when citing common resources

**creed/Creed**

Capitalize only when used as part of a title: “the Apostles’ Creed,” “the Nicene or Athanasian Creeds” or when the meaning is otherwise unclear. Lowercase when referring to any generic creed:

“Do unto others ...” has become his creed.

**cross**

Lowercase.

**Crucified, the**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

**Crucified One**

Capitalize.

## **crucifixion**

Lowercase is *preferred*; capitalize only when the context does not make understanding clear.

## **crusades/Crusades**

Capitalize when referring to the Crusades of the Middle Ages; lowercase elsewhere.

## **dash**

*The following is a summary of the “dash” entry from AP Stylebook, placed here for easy reference; AP Stylebook uses only one type of dash, the em dash; it is used in the following circumstances:*

- Abrupt change in thought or an emphatic pause.
- Attribution at the end of a quotation, followed by the author’s name.

*Note:* a space both precedes and follows the dash; *exception* an en (–) or em (—) dash is used in some biblical citations which encompass more than one chapter.

*see* biblical references.

## **dates**

- *Always* use figures without the ending -st, -nd, -rd, or -th: “Jan. 1, 2009,” *not* “Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009.”
- When the month and year are used alone, spell out the month and do not separate with a comma: “November 1998.”
- When using a full date (month, date, year), or just month and date, abbreviate the months Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.: “Nov. 2, 1998,” but “July 4, 2011”; and “Nov. 2” but “July 4.”
- When using a full date (month, date, year) in the middle of a sentence, a comma follows the year: “We will meet Nov. 2, 1998, at the hall.”
- When using inclusive dates, may drop the century in the second reference: “1920-25,” “2009-10.”
- When using inclusive dates with B.C. and A.D., use full year: “330-300 B.C.,” “A.D. 1900-1905.”

*note:* B.C. follows the date; A.D. precedes it.

*see also* centuries; decades

## **DAYLE**

Definitely-abled Youth Leadership Event or DAYLE is no longer used. The new name is the tAble.

*see* ELCA Youth Gathering

## **Day of Atonement**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **day of judgment**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear, or when it means the same as the Day of the Lord.

## **Day of the Lord**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Deacon/deaconess**

Any minister on the Roster of Word and Service, with the exception of a member of the Deaconess Community, is to be referred to as a “deacon,” regardless of gender. The title of address is “Deacon.” A member of the Deaconess Community is referred to in text as a “deaconess.” *Only* members of the Deaconess Community may be referred to with the feminine form. The title of address for a deaconess is “Sister,” and never “Deaconess.” (*Updated March 2021.*)

## **Dead Sea Scrolls**

Qumran literature.

## **deaf/Deaf**

Use “people who are deaf,” “hearing impaired,” “deaf people”; *do not use* “the deaf” or “hard of hearing”; “Deaf” is capitalized when referring to a culture of people; *note* that the same practice for capitalization *does not* hold for “blind.”

*see also* disability

## **decades**

Use Arabic figures to indicate decades of history; use apostrophes to indicate numerals that are left out:

She composed during the '80s and '90s.

*see also* centuries; dates

## **decimals**

For amounts less than 1, use the numeral zero before the decimal point: “0.3.”

## **delegate**

Use only when referring to Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention; use “voting member” in the context of a churchwide or synod assembly.

## **Deutero-Isaiah**

Capitalize and hyphenate if used.

*Prefer* “2 Isaiah.”

## **developing nation**

*Do not use*; *see* Third World nation.

## **devil**

Lowercase.

## **diaconal minister (do not use)**

Title for associates in ministry, diaconal ministers and deaconesses is now “*deacon*.”

*see* deacon

## **“diakonia”**

*Avoid* usage in public documents; Greek word describing the concept of unconditional service to the neighbor in need; leads inevitably to social change that restores, reforms and transforms.

*Note*: it is *not* placed in quotation marks when used in reference to the team within the Global Mission unit.

## **dialogue/Dialogue**

Lowercase when referencing, in a liturgy, the brief phrases or sentences used responsively between leader and assembly; especially, the three-part dialogue that begins the Great Thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*see also* Great Thanksgiving, the

May be capitalized if used as part of a proper noun:  
He participated in the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue.

### **diaspora/Diaspora**

Capitalize only when referring to the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile or in a title.

### **different from**

Use instead of “different than.”

### **disability**

General term for a permanent or semipermanent condition that may interfere with a person’s capability to do something independently. All references should reflect that the person is more important than the condition. Refer to “people with disabilities” *not* “the disabled”; refer to the specific condition whenever possible: “people who are deaf,” *not* “the deaf”; “people who are blind,” *not* “the blind.”

### **disciples, the**

Lowercase “the 12 disciples”; but capitalize “the Twelve.”  
*see also* apostle

### **Disaster Appeal**

*Do not use; use instead* “Lutheran Disaster Response”  
*see also* Appendix 2 for Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger Style Sheet

### **disaster relief**

*Do not use; use instead* “Lutheran Disaster Response.”  
*see also* Appendix 2 for Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger Style Sheet

### **disease**

Refer to “people with cancer” or “people living with cancer,” “people living with Alzheimer’s disease.” *Do not use* “victim.” All references should reflect that the person is more important than the condition.

### **divine/Divine**

Capitalize when used as a synonym for God: “the Divine”; but lowercase otherwise: “divine grace.”

### **Down syndrome**

*Not* Down’s syndrome.

### **down, up (travel)**

*see* up and down (travel)

### **doxology/Doxology**

An ascription of praise to the Trinity; capitalize only when used as a title of a particular piece of music: “Common Doxology.”

### **each other, one another**

If referring to only two people: They look at each other.

If more than two people: They look at one another.

Use either one for an indefinite number:

We will help each other.

We will help one another.

## **e-Advocacy Network**

Network of people within the ELCA whose purpose is to empower members to advocate for peace, justice and care of creation; *note* capitalization treatment.

## **Easter cycle, the**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Easter Day**

Capitalize.

## **Easter Vigil**

Holy Saturday night celebration of the resurrection; first celebration of Easter.

## **e-binder**

*Note* lowercase; the electronic device used in ELCA churchwide assemblies for the meeting materials

## **e-book**

## **effect**

*see* affect/effect

## **e.g.,**

*Note* punctuation; *always* followed by a comma. Latin for “*exempli gratia*,” means “for the sake of an example”; often the phrase beginning with *e.g.*, is put in parentheses.

We visited several important buildings while in Washington, D.C., (*e.g.*, the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol).

often confused with *i.e.*, *see* *i.e.*

## **ELCA**

*see* Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## **ELCA Board of Pensions (*do not use*)**

Portico Benefit Services now administers pension and other benefit programs of the ELCA, including the benefit plans that continue from the ELCA predecessor churches.

## **ELCA Campus Ministry**

Singular, *not* “... Ministries,” for the name of the program. But the ministries on campuses may be referred to as “campus ministries,” using lowercase and plural form.

## **ELCA Disaster Response**

*Do not use*; *see* Lutheran Disaster Response

*see also* Appendix 2 for Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger Style Sheet

## **ELCA Fund for Leaders**

Scholarship program that supports students attending ELCA seminaries ([elca.org/fundforleaders](http://elca.org/fundforleaders)).

## **ELCA Future Directions 2025**

*Not* “Strategic Directions”; [elca.org/future](http://elca.org/future).

## **ELCA Foundation**

[elca.org/foundation](http://elca.org/foundation)

## **ELCA Global Church Sponsorship**

Components include Missionaries, Young Adults in Global Mission, ELCA, International Women Leaders and Global Ministries.

## **ELCA Good Gifts**

*Do not* refer to the program as simply “Good Gifts” as that is a trademark registered with a different organization; lowercase “catalog” when referring to the ELCA Good Gifts catalog resource.

## **ELCA Malaria Campaign**

Countries involved in the campaign include: Angola, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

## **ELCA Missionaries**

Note capitalization to be used when the context is the list of components of ELCA Global Church Sponsorship.

## **ELCA.org**

Official website of the ELCA.

*Note* capitalization treatment; use “@elca.org” for email addresses, but “ELCA.org” (underscore if your software does not do so automatically).

No need to add “www” or underscore when URL stands alone or is not in running copy.

## **ELCA Outdoor Ministry**

*Do not use* for the name of the program, which is now Lutheran Outdoor Ministries and is not a program of the ELCA. The camps, retreats and conference centers may be referred to as “outdoor ministries” using lowercase and plural form.

## **ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal**

*Do not use in external resource contexts; only acceptable use is for internal communication*, when referring in a broad sense to the fundraising arm or staff that includes both ELCA World Hunger and ELCA Disaster Response.

*see also* Appendix 2 for Lutheran Disaster Response and ELCA World Hunger Style Sheet

## **ELCA Youth Gathering**

May use “the Gathering” (capitalized) on subsequent reference. *Do not use* “National Gathering” or “Youth Gathering.”

Gathering pre-events include the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event or MYLE and the tAble (formerly the Definitely-abled Youth Leadership Event or DAYLE).

## **ELCA Youth Ministry**

Singular, *not* “... Ministries” for the name of the program; lowercase if referring to “youth ministry” in other contexts.

## **elderly**

*Prefer* “older adult”; use the word “elderly” sparingly; usage may be appropriate in generic phrases that do not refer to specific individuals: “a home for the elderly,” “elder hostel,” “elder care”

## ellipsis

Three dots used to indicate, in quoted copy, that some material was purposely left out.

- In general, treat an ellipsis as a three-letter word, constructed with *three periods and two spaces*:  
“Therefore we are to ... gladly act according to his commandments.”
- If the quoted material before the ellipsis makes a complete sentence, place a period at the end of that text before the space and the ellipsis:  
“I am the Lord your God. ... I the Lord your God am a jealous God.”
- If the quoted material before the ellipsis does not make a complete sentence, retain any punctuation that follow the last word before the material being left out:  
“Our Father in heaven, ... now and forever. Amen.”

## email

*Do not* hyphenate; capitalize only if it occurs at the beginning of a sentence.

- For email addresses, use roman type, not italic in all instances.
- Email addresses are not case sensitive; use lowercase for all letters.
- When the email address breaks at the end of a line of copy, do not add any punctuation, such as a hyphen, lest that mark be taken as part of the address:  
I check this email box daily (sam.doe @yahoo.com), so please use that address.
- *Always use* ending punctuation if address falls at the end of a sentence:  
Please contact me at this email address: samantha\_doe@yahoo.com.  
Do not add a space between the email address and the ending punctuation.

## emblem

Part of the brandmark of the ELCA; graphic representation of the ELCA mission statement (Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world.) by means of a four-color-quadrant orb with a black cross dividing the quadrants.

*see also* brandmark

## Emmanuel

Translates from Hebrew as “God with us”; may be used instead of “Immanuel.”

## en and em dashes

*see* dash

## end time(s)

Lowercase.

## e-newsletter

An electronic communication sent to a specific audience on a regular basis (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly); title of the e-newsletter should be set in roman without quotation marks; punctuation and capitalization to vary according to style of the communication.

## ensure, insure

“Ensure” is to make certain or guarantee; “insure” is to protect with insurance.

## entitled

To enable to seek or claim something: She is entitled to her opinion.

*Do not use* in relation to a title; use “titled” instead: The book was titled “Curious George.”

## **epiphany/Epiphany**

Capitalize when referring to the festival on Jan. 6: “the Epiphany of Our Lord,” “Epiphany season,” “time after Epiphany”; but

The travelers on the road to Emmaus experienced an epiphany when Christ revealed himself to them.

## **Episcopal Church, The**

A full communion partner with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; *note* that “The” is part of the incorporated name and must be capitalized.

## **Episcopal (adj.)/Episcopalian (n.)**

Capitalize unless referring in general to a body governed by bishops.

She is an Episcopal priest. (adj.)

Joseph is an Episcopalian. (n.)

But: The episcopal gathering met in closed session.

## **epistle/Epistle**

Lowercase for general usage as in: “the epistle,” “this epistle,” “Paul’s epistles”; but capitalize when referring to the title of a book or a specific section: “the Epistle to the Romans,” “the Epistles.” In liturgical reference, use “second reading.”

## **eschaton**

The end times; last days.

## **Eskimo**

*Do not use.*

*see* Alaska Native

## **eternal Father**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **etc.**

*Avoid* usage if it is possible to be more specific.

## **eternal Lord**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **ethnic, national and racial group references**

- *Avoid* using the term “minority” when referring to ethnic, national or racial groups.
- Usage of the cultural-ethnic background of people is preferred rather than reference to categories of color. This affirms the rich ethnic traditions from which people have come rather than simply indicating skin color or a perceived skin color.
- Take care when using terms that identify people by their skin color, ethnicity or nation of origin. Each group of people has its own history, culture and heritage. Because members of some ethnic groups use different terms when referring to themselves, if possible ask them how they would like to be identified. *see* individual racial group entries for guidelines
  - The ELCA Ethnic Specific Ministry areas, their mission strategies and related associations are:
    - African Descent (African American, Afro Caribbean, African National)
    - American Indian and Alaska Native
    - Arab and Middle Eastern

- Asian and Pacific Islander
- European
- Latino
- Cross Cultural Conversations

### **eucharist/Eucharist**

The celebration of the word of God and the meal of bread and wine; capitalize only when referring to the title of the specific rite in a publication, often accompanied by a source citation; “communion” or “Holy Communion” is often *preferred*.

### **eucharistic**

Lowercase.

### **evangelical/Evangelical**

Lowercase is *preferred*; capitalize when it refers to a specific group or party.

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

The largest Lutheran denomination in the United States; organized in three expressions: congregations, synods and the churchwide organization. Also the only Lutheran denomination in the United States that is a part of The Lutheran World Federation. The acronym (ELCA) may be used after first reference; this acronym is the primary acronym in all related documents and is the only one generally allowed.  
*see also* acronyms; churchwide organization; congregation; synod

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land**

Acronym is ELCJHL and is acceptable only if reference is used more than twice in the document; work around if possible to avoid the acronym.

### ***Evangelical Lutheran Worship***

*Note* title style; do not preface with the article “the”:

We are exploring *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* in adult education class.

Acronym (*ELW*) is permissible, especially when it precedes hymn numbers in publications that contain lists of hymns or refer to both liturgical pages and hymn numbers, such as:

ELW 347

ELW, p. 252

ELW #347

### **evangelist**

Lowercase when referring to a writer of a Gospel: “the evangelist Mark”; but capitalize in the title of a festival: “Mark, Evangelist.”

### **evening prayer/Evening Prayer**

*Preferred* term for “vespers”; capitalize only when referring to the title for the specific service, especially if followed by page number or book title.

### **everyone, every one**

*see* anyone, any one; everyone, every one; someone, some one

### **exile, the**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

**exodus, the**

Capitalize only when referring to the book of Exodus or when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

**fair trade**

Lowercase. Hyphenate only when used as a combined adjective: “fair-trade coffee.”

**faith-based community organizing**

Hyphenate. “Congregation-based organizing” or “congregation-based community organizing” are also permissible.

**fall, the**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

**fall from grace**

Lowercase.

**farther, further**

“Farther” describes greater physical distance:

He was farther along the woodland trail than I.

“Further” refers to time or greater degree:

Further research will need to be done.

**Father**

Capitalize when it refers to the first person of the Trinity.

**Father’s Day**

Capitalize and use apostrophe appropriately.

**feast day**

General term for festivals, lesser festivals or commemorations; lowercase. But uppercase feast in liturgical contexts:

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

**festival**

Generally lowercase: “festival of Transfiguration.”

**fewer, less**

“Fewer” applies to countable items: “fewer people,” “fewer products.”

“Less” applies to bulk or mass measurements or abstract concepts: “less grain,” “less heat,” “less happiness.”

**final judgment**

Lowercase. *Note* British spelling has a second “e” (“judgement”).

**first fruits**

Lowercase.

**flier, Flyer**

“Flier” is an airline pilot or a printed circular. Use capitalized “Flyer” only as part of a proper name for some train and bus lines: Amtrak’s Philadelphia Flyer leaves Chicago at noon daily.

**flood, the**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

**follow up, follow-up**

“Follow up” (two words) is a verb:

He said we could follow up at the next meeting.

Hyphenate in noun and adjective usages:

The follow-up took all afternoon.

He promised to do a follow-up session at the next meeting.

**font**

Basin or pool holding water for baptism; may use “baptismal font” for clarity.

**footnotes**

Should be discouraged if at all possible. If a document must use footnotes, the style of the entire resource, including the footnotes, should generally follow Chicago Manual of Style, as well as ELCA specific style elements noted in this guide.

**for example**

*see e.g.,*

**for-profit**

Hyphenate when used as an adjective.

*see also* nonprofit

**foreign language words or phrases**

Place the word or phrase in quotation marks and provide the English translation in parentheses.

**foreigner**

*Avoid*; use “international guest/student” or “visitor” instead.

**full communion**

Do not hyphenate:

The Episcopal Church is in full communion with the ELCA.

The United Methodist Church is one of the ELCA’s full communion partners.

The correct names of the ELCA’s six full communion partners are:

- The Episcopal Church
- Moravian Church in America
- Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Reformed Church in America
- United Church of Christ
- The United Methodist Church

*see also* specific church body entries

**full time**

If used as a noun, it is two words: She works full time.

As an adjective, it should be hyphenated: The company has 99 full-time employees.

**fundamentalism (n.)**

## **fundamentalist (n., adj.)**

## **fundraiser, fundraising**

*Never hyphenate.*

## **furlough**

*Avoid; use “home leave” instead.*

## **further**

*see farther, further*

## **Garden of Eden**

*Note capitalization treatment; but “the garden.”*

## **Garden of Gethsemane**

*Note capitalization treatment; but “the garden.”*

## **gay (adj.)**

*Preferred usage for reference to men with same-gender sexual orientation; never used as a noun.*

*see also LGBTQ and LGBTQIA*

## **Gendered language**

When possible, use terms and labels that can apply to any gender. Other language cannot always be gender-neutral but have gender-neutral alternatives when the person’s gender is not known.

### **brother/sister/sibling**

When referencing attachment to the Godhead – especially in worship – the gender-neutral term “siblings in Christ” should be used.

### **mother/father/parent**

When not talking about a specific role or event or when the gender is not known, “parent” should be used instead.

### **preferred pronoun**

*Do not use.* It has since been replaced by “personal pronoun” or “pronoun.”

### **pronouns**

Pronouns for entries in forms and elsewhere should include:

- he/him/his
- she/her/hers
- they/them/theirs
- other (with an option to fill in the blank of the pronoun)
- none (just the person’s name)

### **son/daughter/child**

“Child” should be used when the gender is not known or when talking about a hypothetical child.

“Children of God” should be used instead of “sons and daughters of God.”

### **they/them/theirs**

These can function as both singular and plural pronouns. It is the optimal substitute when discussing someone whose gender is not yet known or when talking about hypothetical people.

### **titles of people in forms**

Forms should use the following titles

- Bishop
- Deacon
- Dr.
- Mr.
- Mrs.
- Ms.
- Mx.
- Pastor
- Sister\*
- The Rev.
- (None)\*\*

\*“Sister” can only be used for members of Deaconess community.

\*\*“None” is in parenthesis to indicate that it is not a formal title but rather the person chooses not to use a title to reflect the absence of using pronouns.

### **gentile (n., adj.)**

Lowercase unless capitalized in original quoted source.

### **girl**

Use only for women under age 12.

*see* adult; woman; young adult; youth

### **global mission**

*Note* that this is *not* used as a plural noun, “global missions”; *avoid use* as a unit name in any public document when referring to the global mission work of the ELCA.

### **“glocal”**

Describes the intersection of global and local work; in the ELCA, *avoid usage* in public documents; use other terminology that is more readily understood; use exclusively as it relates to the global mission work of the ELCA; prefer the use of quotation marks so the reader knows it is not a misspelling.

### **god/God**

Capitalize only when referring to the Judeo-Christian God; lowercase when it refers to mythological figures.  
*see* gods and goddesses

### **God Almighty**

Capitalize.

### **God Incarnate**

Capitalize.

### **godlike**

Lowercase, no hyphen.

### **godliness/godly**

Lowercase.

## **God Most High**

Capitalize.

## **gods and goddesses**

Lowercase when referring to false gods, mythological gods:

Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites.

Diana was the Roman goddess of the moon.

## **Godspeed**

Capitalize.

## **God with us**

The translation for “Emmanuel” or “Immanuel.”

## **“God’s work. Our hands.”**

The official, registered tagline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The ELCA’s dedicated day of service is: “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday.

*See also tagline.*

## **golden rule**

Lowercase.

## **Good Friday**

Capitalize.

## **Good News**

Capitalize only when referring to any or all of the four Gospels in the New Testament.

## **good/Good Samaritan**

Lowercase “good” when referring to the man in the biblical parable: “the good Samaritan”; capitalize “Good” only when referring to a type of person or used as metaphor:

She’s a Good Samaritan.

They passed a Good Samaritan law.

## **Good Shepherd**

Capitalize when referring to Jesus Christ.

## **gospel/Gospel**

Lowercase when used as a general term meaning “good news” or “story” of Jesus Christ; when referring to the law and the gospel; when referring to the third reading in the service: “gospel acclamation,” “gospel responses.”

Capitalize when used as a specific reference to any or all of the four New Testament Gospels: “the four Gospels,” “the Holy Gospel,” “the Gospel of Matthew”; when used as a title of a document: “Gospel of Thomas,” “Synoptic Gospels,” “the Fourth Gospel (John)”; when referring to a section of the Bible: “the Gospels.”

## **grassroots**

One word.

**Great Commandment, the**

As found in Matthew 22:37.

**Great Commission, the**

As found in Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15.

**Great Thanksgiving, the**

In the communion service, the body of actions and words beginning with the three-part dialogue and concluding with the Lord's Prayer.

*see also* dialogue

**Hades**

Capitalize.

**hallelujah/Hallelujah!**

Capitalize when used as an interjection.

**handicap**

*Do not use* to describe a disability; do not refer to people with disabilities as “the handicapped” or “handicapped people.”

*see* disability

**Hanukkah**

*Preferred* spelling.

**Head of the church, the**

Capitalize “Head” when the phrase refers to Christ.

**headlines, style of**

Generally headlines in all resources should be styled with first word capitalized, all other words lowercase.

**heaven**

Lowercase.

**Hebrew**

The Semitic language of the ancient Hebrews, or any of various later forms of the language; a member of or a descendent from one of a group of northern Semitic peoples, including the Israelites.

**hell**

Lowercase.

**high church/low church**

*Avoid* using; instead describe the service and what happened during it.

**high priest**

Lowercase.

**high priesthood (n.)**

Lowercase.

**high priestly prayer**

Lowercase; as found in John 17.

**higher power**

Lowercase.

**Hispanic**

*do not use*

*see Latino*

**historic, historical**

An important or famous event is “historic”: “historic battle,” “historic speech.” Any event of, or relating to, history is “historical”: “historical novel,” “historical data.” Both words are preceded by “a,” *not* “an.”

**historical-critical method**

Hyphenate.

**HIV**

Acronym for human immunodeficiency virus: “person who is HIV-positive”; use all caps, no periods.

*Use* “HIV and AIDS”; *do not use* “HIV/AIDS” or language that describes the person as a “victim” of the disease.

*Note:* HIV-positive people do not necessarily also have AIDS.

*see also* AIDS

**Holy Baptism**

*see* baptism

**Holy Bible**

Capitalize.

**holy city**

Lowercase when referring to a city that is the center of religious worship and traditions: “the holy city of Mecca.”

**Holy Communion**

*see* communion

**Holy Eucharist**

*see* eucharist

**holy family**

Lowercase.

**holy Father**

Capitalize “holy” only when referring to the title of the pope in the Roman Catholic Church.

**Holy Ghost**

*do not use*

*see* Holy Spirit

**Holy Land**

Capitalize when referring to historical or current Israel.

**Holy One**

Capitalize.

**Holy Scripture**

*prefer* “Bible”

**holy Son**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

**Holy Spirit**

Capitalize when referring to the third person of the Trinity.

**Holy Trinity, the**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

**holy water**

Lowercase.

**Holy Week**

The time from the Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday) until the beginning of the Maundy Thursday liturgy.

**Holy Writ**

*Do not use*; arcane.

**homeless**

Use only as an adjective; “people who are homeless.”

**homosexual**

*do not use*

*see* gay, lesbian, LGBTQIA+

**hopefully**

Means “in a hopeful manner”:

I waited hopefully for a cab.

*Do not use* to mean “it is hoped,” “let us hope” or “we hope”; use those phrases instead:

We hope to finish the draft by early April.

*Not* “Hopefully, we will finish the draft by ....”

**hosanna/Hosanna!**

Capitalize when used as interjection.

**house church**

Lowercase.

**house of God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **humankind**

*Preferred* over “mankind” unless quoting from an original source.

## **hymn text, text of a hymn**

Use instead of “lyrics.”

## **hymn titles**

In lists of hymns and when hymn titles are written out in a worship folder, quotation marks are *not* necessary:

ELW 558 Lord God We Praise You

ELW 572 Now It Is Evening

For capitalization, follow original source.

## **hyphen**

*see* dash, hyphen. *See also* AP Stylebook, “Punctuation”

## **i.e.,**

Abbreviation for Latin “id est” or “that is; in other words”; *note* punctuation; *always* followed by a comma; expression is usually put in parentheses.

Today is the first day of the Lenten season (i.e., Ash Wednesday).

often confused with e.g.,

*see also* e.g.,

## **illegal aliens**

*Do not use; preferred* reference is to “undocumented people” or “refugees.”

## **“imago Dei”**

Use quotation marks; translates from Latin as “image of God.”

## **Immanuel**

Translates from Hebrew as “God with us”; may be used instead of “Emmanuel.”

## **in, into, in to**

“In” indicates location:

Elvis is in the building.

“Into” indicates motion:

Elvis walked into the building.

“In” can also be part of a phrasal verb:

Elvis broke in to the building.

## **incarnate**

Lowercase “incarnate” when it is used as an adjective: “incarnate Word”; capitalize it when used as a name for Jesus: “Word Incarnate.”

## **Incarnate Word of God**

Capitalize when used as a name for Jesus.

## **incarnation**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

**Indian**

Use only for a person from India.

*see* American Indian for proper usage when reference is to Indigenous people of North America

**Indigenous**

Note capitalization

**initials, treatment of**

When part of a name, use periods and no spaces: “C.S. Lewis.”

**installation**

Lowercase, but capitalize when used in the title of the rite: “Rite of Installation.”

**insure**

*see* ensure, insure

**inter**

In general, do not hyphenate after this prefix.

*Exception:* “Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations”; *note also* the capitalization used in this instance

*see* prefix

**interface (n.)**

*Do not use* as a verb.

**International Leaders Program**

The new name for the ELCA Global Mission International Leadership Development program.

**internet**

Lowercase. A decentralized, worldwide network of computers that can communicate with each other; the World Wide Web is a subset of the internet, not a synonym; may use “the net” for subsequent references.

**interunit**

Do not hyphenate.

**intranet**

A private network for use within a company; lowercase.

**Inuit**

One of numerous Alaska Native people; Indigenous people of southwestern Alaska.

*see also* Alaska Native

**Inupiat**

One of numerous Alaska Native people; Indigenous people of southern Alaska and the Seward Peninsula; many ELCA members in Alaskan congregations are Inupiat.

*see also* Alaska Native

**Islam**

The name of the religion; “Muslim” refers to a person who adheres to Islamic practices.

## **Israelite**

A descendent of the Old Testament man named Jacob, who was later renamed Israel. Also a native or inhabitant of the ancient Northern Kingdom of Israel.

## **its, it's**

“Its” is a possessive pronoun:

The ELCA has changed its landmark.

“It’s” is the contraction of “it is”:

It’s going to rain.

## **Jesus’**

Possessive form for “Jesus.”

## **Jew**

*Do not use* unless referring to the first people living in Judah when the Israelites were divided into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. After the Babylonian captivity, all descendants of Abraham were called Jews. Since the Jews were God’s chosen people, Paul sometimes spoke of a true Jew as being anyone who pleases God.

*Note:* It is inaccurate to use as a blanket term for those who doubted or persecuted Jesus.

*see* Jewish people

## **Jewish people**

Use when referring to the contemporary situation.

*do not use* “the Jews”

## **judges/Judges**

Capitalize only when referring to the book in the Bible.

## **judgment day**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

## **junior, senior**

No comma between the last name of the individual and the abbreviation “Jr.,” “Sr.” or a generation indicator such as “III”:

Martin Luther King Jr.

John F. Kennedy Sr.

John Anderson III

## **King of kings**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **kingdom of God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **kingdom of heaven**

Lowercase.

## **Koran/Quran**

Muslim holy book. *Preferred* spelling is “Quran,” except when another form is preferred by an organization or in a specific title or name.

**laity**

*Preferred*; use instead of “laymen,” “laywomen,” “layperson.” Also acceptable: “laypeople.”

**Lamb of God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

**Large Catechism**

Do not place in quotation marks.

**last judgment**

Lowercase.

**Last Supper**

Capitalize.

**Latino (m. or collective); Latina (f.)**

*Preferred* over “Hispanic.” Use a more specific identification when possible, such as Cuban, Puerto Rican or Mexican American. Since members of some ethnic groups use different terms when referring to themselves, if possible ask them how they would like to be identified.

**law/Law**

Lowercase in “God’s law,” “law and gospel.” Capitalize in “the Law of Moses” (meaning the first five books of the Old Testament). *Always* capitalize when referring to Torah: “the Law.”

**lay, lie**

“Lay” always requires a direct object:

I will lay the paper down while I eat.

“Lie” means to recline or to tell an untruth:

I will lie down for a rest.

What he told me was a lie.

*see also* AP Stylebook, “lay, lie”

**laymen/laywomen/layperson**

“Laity” is *preferred*.

**lay reader**

Lowercase.

**lead/led**

Past tense of “lead” is “led.”

**lectern**

Ambo is often *preferred* in liturgical usage.

**lectionary/Lectionary**

Book containing the full texts of Scripture readings for proclamation in the liturgy. Capitalize only when used within a title: “the Revised Common Lectionary.”

**Lent/Lenten**

Capitalize.

**lesbian (n., adj.)**

*Preferred* usage for reference to women with same-gender sexual orientation.

*see also* gay, LGBTQ and LGBTQIA+

**less**

*see* fewer, less

**lesser festivals**

Days on the calendar celebrating the life of Christ and other people or events:

The commemoration of Stephen, the first martyr, on Dec. 26, is a lesser festival.

**lesson**

“Reading” is *preferred*.

**letter/Letter**

Capitalize when referring to the title of a biblical book or specific section: “Letter to the Romans”;

but “the letter Paul sent to Rome,” “this letter.”

**LGBTQ and LGBTQIA+**

Acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer” and “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexuality +(stands for all of the other sexualities, sexes and genders that aren’t included in these letters). Both can be used on first reference without full explanation, especially in headlines, if the audience will understand the usage. *Preferred* because it indicates the diversity of the community.

*Note*, also the following usages: “gay man”; “bisexual woman or man”; “transgender person.”

**lie, lay**

*see* “lay, lie”

*see also* AP Stylebook, “lay, lie”

**life-giving**

*Note* hyphenation.

**lifelong**

One word, no hyphen.

**lifesaving**

One word, no hyphen.

**Light of lights**

Capitalize “Light” when referring to Christ.

**Light of the world**

Capitalize “Light” when referring to Christ.

**like**

*see* as, like

## **lists in running text**

Use a colon with bullets, numbers or symbols; capitalize the beginning of each bulleted sentence and end each with a period. Example:

With your own illustrations, show how:

- Listening is active.
- Attitude is important.
- Silence is golden.

## **liturgy**

The words and actions that form the worship of the Christian assembly.

## **living God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **living Lord**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **LivingLutheran.com**

The website of the ELCA's magazine, which includes articles from the print magazine and new content uploaded weekly. Uppercase the "Ls" in the address for promotional material; lowercase in editorial material.

## **living Word**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **logo**

*Do not use* in reference to ELCA branding; use "brandmark" instead.  
*see* brandmark

## **Logos**

Capitalize when referring to Christ.

## **Lord**

Capitalize.

## **Lord of lords**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Lord's day**

Sunday.

## **lordship of God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Lord's Prayer**

Capitalize.

## **Lord's Supper**

Used as a synonym for Holy Communion.

## **loving-kindness**

Hyphenate.

## **low church, high church**

*Avoid* using; instead describe the service and what happened during it.

## ***Lutheran Book of Worship***

Do not preface with the article “the”:

We are exploring *Lutheran Book of Worship* in adult education class.

Acronym (LBW) in roman type may be used only when preceding hymn numbers in publications that contain lists of hymns or refer to both liturgical pages and hymn numbers:

LBW 347

LBW, p. 252

## **Lutheran Center, the**

The building that houses the churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; should *not* be referred to as “the ELCA.”

## **Lutheran church**

*Note* capitalization treatment; capitalize “Church” only as part of a corporate title: “Faith Lutheran Church.”

## **Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, The**

Use an em dash when spelling out the denominational name.

*Note:* If reference is to the legally or formally incorporated body, “The” should be included as part of name and should be capitalized.

## **Lutheran Disaster Response**

Includes both the domestic and international disaster response work that the ELCA does; *see* Appendix 2 for further information.

## **Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**

*Note* that the name is *not* “Services.”

## **Lutheran Outdoor Ministries**

Associated with the ELCA, but is not a direct program of the ELCA.

## **Lutheran Services in America**

The ELCA, along with 300 health and human service organizations, participates in this alliance, which serves people in the United States and the Caribbean.

## **Lutheran social ministry organizations**

When referring to a group of them, capitalize only “Lutheran.”

## **Lutheran World Federation, The**

International association of Lutheran churches of which there are 70 million members; the ELCA is the only Lutheran denomination in the United States that belongs to the federation.

*Note* that “The” is part of the name and should be capitalized and included only in *legal or formal references*.

## **Lutheran World Relief**

*Not* “the Lutheran World Relief.”

## **lyrics**

*Prefer* “hymn text,” “text of a hymn.”

## **magi**

Use instead of “wise men.”

## **major prophets/Major Prophets**

Capitalize when referring to the section of the Bible that includes Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel:

The next portion of Scripture that we will study is the Major Prophets.

Lowercase when referring to a person:

Isaiah was one of the five major prophets.

## **man**

Use for any adult; don’t use “male.”

*see also* adult; boy; young adult; youth

## **man of sorrows**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

## **mass**

Capitalize when referring to the religious ceremony:

Father Burns celebrated the Mass at 8 a.m. yesterday.

Lowercase when referring to a musical setting of the Mass:

J.S. Bach wrote a mass setting in B minor.

## **matins**

*see* morning prayer

## **Maundy Thursday**

Capitalize.

## **means of grace**

In Lutheran usage, the word of God and the sacraments through which God’s grace comes to people; use “The Use of the Means of Grace” when referencing the official ELCA statement on the practice of word and sacrament.

## **messages, ELCA**

Messages of the ELCA (<http://elca.org/socialmessages>):

- Are built on its social policy.
- Draw attention to certain priority concerns that arise from its mission in the world and encourage discussion and action.
- Address the contemporary situation in light of the prophetic and compassionate traditions of the Bible.
- Are adopted by the Church Council.
- Express the convictions of the leaders of this church.

Messages of the ELCA appear in copy in quotation marks, *not* italics; they include:

“Message on AIDS and the Church’s Ministry of Caring”

“Message on the Body of Christ and Mental Illness”  
“Message on Commercial Sexual Exploitation”  
“Message on Community Violence”  
“Message on End-of-Life Decisions”  
“Message on Gender-Based Violence”  
“Message on Government and Civic Engagement in the United States”  
“Message on Homelessness”  
“Message on Immigration”  
“Message on the Israeli/Palestinian Conflict”  
“Message on People Living with Disabilities”  
“Message on Sexuality”  
“Message on Suicide Prevention”  
“Message on Terrorism”

### **messiah/Messiah**

Capitalize only when used as a name for Christ or referring to an eschatological figure in Judaism or Christianity:

The Messiah was born in Bethlehem.  
He had a messiah complex.

### **messianic**

Lowercase.

### **messianic age**

Lowercase.

### **Methodist Church**

*see* United Methodist Church, The

### **Mexican American**

Do not hyphenate (*exception* to AP Stylebook); U.S. citizens of Mexican descent.  
*see also* Latino

### **Middle East, Mideast, Near East**

“Middle East” is *preferred*; “Mideast” is also acceptable.

### **midrash/Midrash**

Plural is “midrashim. Hebrew term for “explanation” or “exposition”; capitalize when referring to a collection of writings; otherwise, lowercase.

### **microfinancing**

*Note* that this term is *not* hyphenated.

### **microlending**

*Note*, this is *not* hyphenated.

### **microloan**

*Note*, this is *not* hyphenated.

**millennium (n.)**

Millennia (plural).

**minister**

Collectively, “clergy” is used in the ELCA to refer to rostered ministers of Word and Sacrament. Within the ELCA, the term “rostered ministers” is preferred, because it includes both ministers of Word and Sacrament and ministers of Word and Service.”

*see also* clergy titles

**minority**

*Do not use* when referring to racial groups.

**minor prophets/Minor Prophets**

Capitalize when referring to the section of the Bible:

The 12 books in the Minor Prophets section of the Bible are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Lowercase when referring to a person:

Amos was one of the minor prophets.

**“missio Dei”**

Use with quotation marks; translates from Latin as “sending of God.”

**missionary**

*Prefer* referencing a specific job instead: “teachers in China,” “translators in Ethiopia.”

Jack, who works in animal husbandry in Nigeria, is a missionary supported by our congregation.

*Do not use* “mission personnel.”

**Mission Support (n.)**

Portion of congregational offerings that is shared with the synod and churchwide organization to support ministries in those expressions of the ELCA.

*Note* when associated with the ELCA, this term is a proper noun, and is therefore capitalized; it is never hyphenated:

Mission Support enables the ELCA to do its work.

**mission to**

*Avoid*; use “mission with” instead.

The ELCA is in mission with companion churches throughout the world.

**missional**

*Avoid* usage in public documents; describe what is meant in clear adjectival terms instead.

*Exception*: Missional Leadership Centers.

**Missional Leadership Centers**

Formerly known as “mission schools”; name changed because of the historical negative connotation.

*Exception* to the usage of “missional.”

**modern-day (adj.)**

Hyphenate when used as an adjective to modify a noun: “modern-day usage,” “modern-day Germany.”

**Mohammed**

*Do not use*; use “Muhammad” instead (unless it is a specific person’s name).

**month**

*see* dates

**Moravian Church in America**

The Southern and Northern Provinces, Eastern West Indies Province and the Alaska Province of the Moravian Church in America are full communion partners with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

**morning prayer/Morning Prayer**

*Preferred* term for “matins.” Capitalize only when referring to the title for the service of Morning Prayer, especially if followed by page number or book title.

**Moslem**

*Do not use*; use “Muslim” instead.

**Most High**

*Note* capitalization.

**Most High God**

*Note* capitalization.

**Mother’s Day**

*Note* capitalization and apostrophe treatment.

**Mr., Mrs., Ms.**

*see* courtesy titles

**Muhammad**

*Preferred*; *do not use* “Mohammed.”

**multicultural**

Do not hyphenate.

**Muslim**

Refers to people who adhere to the religion called Islam. *Do not use* “Moslem.”

**MYLE**

Multicultural Youth Leadership Event.

*see* ELCA National Youth Gathering

**national groups**

*see* ethnic, national and racial group references

**Native American**

*Prefer* “American Indian.” If possible use the name of the nation:

He is a Hopi commissioner.

James Shepherd, Laguna, spoke at the Indigenous Institute.

Because members of some ethnic groups use different terms when referring to themselves, if possible ask how they would like to be identified.

### **nativity/Nativity**

Capitalize in liturgical contexts:

the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

Otherwise lowercase:

There were probably donkeys at the nativity of Christ.

### **new Adam**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

### **new covenant**

*Avoid* this term except in the words of institution within the Great Thanksgiving in a liturgy; rewrite for clarity of meaning.

*Prefer* “New Testament.”

### **New Jerusalem**

Capitalize.

### **New Revised Standard Version, the**

*Preferred* version of the Bible for use in ELCA. Abbreviated in second and subsequent references as “NRSV.” If it’s necessary, in a particular context, to quote from another version, reasoning for this deviation from the standard should be provided when the document is submitted to Strategic Communications for editorial review as well as an indication of which version is being used.

*see also* Appendix 1 for appropriate credit lines for various versions of the Bible

### **new-start congregation**

Hyphenate when “new-start” is an adjective.

### **New Testament**

Capitalize.

### **Nicene Creed, the**

Capitalize, but lowercase “creed” when using the short form in subsequent references: “the creed.”

### **night prayer/Night Prayer**

*Preferred* term for “compline,” the daily prayer service for use at the end of the day, just prior to retiring for the night. Capitalize only when referring to the title for the service of Night Prayer, especially if followed by page number or book title.

### **Ninety-five Theses**

*note* capitalization treatment when used as a title:

Read Luther’s “95 Theses” for our next class session.

He nailed 95 theses to the door of the church.

### **nonprofit**

No hyphen.

## nonsexist language

- *Avoid* using terms that unnecessarily specify someone’s gender, such as “chairman” or “prophetess”; in most cases, “chair” or “prophet” can be used instead; *exception to AP Stylebook*.
- *Avoid* sexism by using nongender-specific language such as “humanity” or “humankind” instead of “mankind,” except when directly quoting from an original source.

*see also* gendered language

## numbers/numerals

- *In general, do not* begin a sentence with a numeral; spell out a number at the beginning of a sentence or rewrite the sentence.
- Spell out the first nine cardinal and ordinal numbers when used in text:
  - There were eight applicants.
  - She was the sixth spelling bee contestant.
- Use figures for numbers above nine:
  - The table was set for 10.
  - There were 50 in the audience.
- These “spell out” and “use figures” rules above *do not apply* to ages, figures in headlines, figures containing decimals, statistics, results of voting, percentages, sums of money, times of day, days of month, latitude and longitude, degrees of temperature, dimension, measurements and proportion, numbers that are part of titles, or sports points
- Spell out large numbers:
  - They planned to raise \$2 million.
- With four digits, use a comma in the number, as in “2,000,” except in reference to a year: “A.D. 2000”
- *Do not use* “firstly” or “secondly”; use “first” and “second”
- Use numerals for both % and percentages:
  - 2%
  - 3.75%
  - 0.6%
  - 10 percentage points
- Use numerals to express age:
  - 5 years old
  - 32-year-old
- Fractions should be written out and hyphenated:
  - two-thirds
  - three-fourths

## offering

Lowercase.

## offertory (adj.)

*Prefer* “offering” or “offering prayer.”

## old Adam

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## old covenant/Old Covenant

*Avoid* using the capitalized form, which is a synonym for Old Testament; *prefer* “Old Testament.”

**Old Testament**

Capitalize; in liturgical reference, use “first reading.”

**older adult**

*Preferred* term

**one another**

*see* each other, one another

**One in Three**

The Trinity.

**online**

Do not hyphenate.

**ordination/Ordination**

Lowercase, but capitalize when used in the title of the rite: “Rite of Ordination.”

**ordained ministers**

*Not* ordained pastors

**Oriental**

*Do not use*

*see* Asian

**original sin**

Lowercase.

**orthodox(y)/Orthodox**

Capitalize only when referring to the Eastern Christian groups: “Russian Orthodox,” “Greek Orthodox,” “Orthodox churches”; or “Orthodox Jews”; but “Lutheran orthodoxy.”

**outreach to**

*Avoid*; use “outreach among” instead.

**Pacific Islanders**

Use to refer to people from Pacific Island countries. Whenever possible, make references to a specific ethnic heritage: “Tongan,” “Fijian,” “Tahitian,” “Marshallese,” “Trukese.”

**page**

Abbreviated “p.” for one page and “pp.” for two or more: “p. 439”; “pp. 67–71”

**Palm Sunday**

In liturgical usage, *prefer* “Sunday of the Passion.”

**parable**

Lowercase even when used to refer to a particular parable: “parable of the good Samaritan,” “parable of the sower.”

**Paraclete**

Translates from Greek as “advocate” or “intercessor”; refers to the Holy Spirit.

**parousia**

Greek word referring to the second coming of Christ (*exception to Merriam-Webster’s*, which capitalizes it); *do not* italicize or place in quotation marks.

**paschal**

Lowercase as an adjective: “paschal candle,” “paschal mystery,” “paschal lamb,” “paschal full moon”; typically needs definition or explanatory phrase when used.

**paschal lamb/Paschal Lamb**

Capitalize when used as a substitute name for Jesus:

The Paschal Lamb was sacrificed for our sins.

But Jesus is the paschal lamb.

**Paschal Triduum**

*Prefer* “the Three Days.”

**Passion, the**

Capitalize when referring to a day: “Sunday of the Passion”; a portion of Scripture: “the Passion narrative”; or the suffering of Jesus: “the Passion of Christ.”

**Passion Week**

*Prefer* Holy Week.

**Passover Feast**

Capitalize.

**pastor**

Usage should be “pastor of First Lutheran” not “pastor at First Lutheran.”

*see* clergy titles

**Pastoral Epistles**

*Prefer* Pastoral Letters.

**Pauline Epistles**

*Prefer* Pauline Letters.

**Peace Not Walls**

The ELCA works for justice and peace in Palestine and Israel through its campaign, Peace Not Walls.

([elca.org/peacenotwalls](http://elca.org/peacenotwalls)).

**Pentateuch**

Capitalize.

**pentateuchal**

Lowercase.

**Pentecost**

Capitalize.

**pentecostal/Pentecostals**

Capitalize only when referring to a specific religious group.

**people living in poverty**

Use instead of “the poor.”

**percent**

AP style changed its guideline on percent in 2019. Using the symbol % is now permissible in running text.

Use numerals, not words, for the quantity expressed: “4%,” “0.6%.”

Use % if quoting interest rates, statistics or in fundraising materials in charts/lists.

**percentage construction: plural vs. singular**

*Prefer singular:* “1 in 9 people lives in poverty.”

**person/people**

Plural form of person is “people,” *not* “persons.”

*Exception:* use “persons” only for the voting category: “persons of color or language other than English”; or in other constitutionally mandated instances; or in reference to the triune God: “God in three persons.”

**petition/Petition**

Capitalize when referring to individual petitions of the Lord’s Prayer: “the Third Petition”; but “this petition.”

**Ph.D./M.Div./D.Min.**

Avoid in editorial copy. If used, note usage of periods and no spaces between characters.

**Pharisees**

Capitalize.

**pietism/Pietism**

Capitalize only when referring to a movement in the 17th and 18th centuries.

**pietists/Pietists**

*see* pietism

**poor, the**

*Do not use;* use “people living in poverty.”

**Portico Benefit Services**

Portico Benefit Services is a separately incorporated ministry of the ELCA based in Minnesota that provides retirement, health and related benefits and services to enhance the well-being of nearly 50,000 rostered ministers, employees and their families in the ELCA.

**position titles**

*see* titles of ELCA churchwide staff

**postal codes**

*see* state names

**prayer at the close of the day**

*see* night prayer

**precious blood**

Lowercase.

**prefixes**

- In general, do not hyphenate when the word after the prefix starts with a consonant (*exception*: “Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations”).
- Hyphenation should be used:
  - When the prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel (*exception*: words like “cooperate,” “coordinate,” “coexist,” “coequal”).
  - If the word that follows the prefix is capitalized: “sub-Saharan.”
  - If the prefix is doubled: “sub-subparagraph.”

*see* AP Stylebook, specific listings for commonly used prefixes

**Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

A full communion partner with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. *Note* the periods in the initials when the full name of the church body is used.

**presiding bishop**

The title of the president and chief executive officer of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. When the title comes before the name, capitalize:

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America held a news conference.

Lowercase when the office is identified after the name:

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, presiding bishop of the ELCA, said ....

**presiding bishop emeritus**

New title for former presiding bishops. Uppercase before a name; lowercase after.

*Note*: Check with synods since some also use the title “emeritus” for former synod bishops: Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod Bishop Emeritus Floyd Schoenhalls.

**presiding minister**

Lowercase.

**priesthood of all believers**

Lowercase.

**Prince of Peace**

Capitalize; refers to Christ.

**prodigal son**

Lowercase.

**promised land**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

**Promised One, the**

Capitalize; refers to Jesus.

**propers, the**

Lowercase. The portion of the liturgy that varies according to the particular feast, day or season of the year.

**prophecy (n.)**

The inspired words of a prophet; a prediction of a future event.

**prophesy, prophesied (v.)**

To say something by, or as if by, divine inspiration; to predict.

**Prophet, Priest and King**

Capitalize when used together in a series referring to Christ.

**prophetess**

*Avoid*; use “prophet.”

**prophets/Prophets**

Capitalize when referring to the section of the Bible:

The Prophets are the 17 books of the Bible beginning with Isaiah and ending with Malachi.

Lowercase when referring to a person:

Isaiah was one of the prophets.

*see also* major prophets; minor prophets

**Protestantism**

Capitalize.

**providence/Providence**

Lowercase when referring to divine guidance; capitalize when referring to God.

**psalmist**

Lowercase.

**psalm/Psalm**

Capitalize only when referring to the book in the Bible: “the book of Psalms”; or a specific passage: “Psalm 8:3-6.”

Lowercase when used as a general term: “this psalm,” “some psalms”:

My favorite psalm is Psalm 23.

**psalter/Psalter**

Capitalize only when used as a synonym for the book of Psalms

## **quotation marks and punctuation**

Periods and commas *always* go inside the quotation marks; colons and semicolons *always* go outside quotation marks unless the punctuation applies to quoted material. Question marks or exclamation marks go inside the quotation mark only if the quoted material is the question or exclamation.

*Exception:* place period after the citation for quotations of Scripture or ELCA constitutional provisions, bylaws or resolutions:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son” (John 3:16).

## **Quran**

*Preferred* spelling for the Muslim holy book rather than “Koran” or “Qur’an”; use another form only if preferred by a specific organization or when quoting a specific title or name.

## **racial groups**

*see* ethnic, national and racial group references

## **reading**

The Scripture texts appointed for public reading in the liturgy; *preferred* over “lesson.”

## **real presence**

Lowercase.

## **redemption**

Lowercase.

## **Reformation, the**

Note capitalization.

*see also* “Counter-Reformation”

## **Reformed church**

Refers to Calvinist traditions; capitalize “church” only when referring to a specific church: “Wheaton Christian Reformed Church”; or to the corporate title of a church body: “Reformed Church in America”

## **Reformed Church in America**

A full communion partner with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## **reformer**

Lowercase even when it refers to a leader in the Protestant Reformation.

## **region**

Capitalize when used as the name of a portion of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. For subsequent usage lowercase “the region.” Use Arabic numbers for regional identification: “Region 7.”

## **resurrection**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

## **Rev., the**

*Always* use the abbreviated form, *not* “Reverend”

*see* clergy titles

## **Revised Common Lectionary**

Do not italicize or place in quotation marks unless referring to a specific publication.

## **righteous**

Lowercase.

## **righteous God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Righteous One**

Capitalize when it refers to Christ.

## **risen Lord**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Risen One**

Capitalize when it refers to Christ.

## **Rite of Holy Baptism**

*see* baptism

## **Roman Catholic Church, the**

Capitalize “church” only when referring to a specific church or to the corporate title of a church body: “St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church,” “the Roman Catholic Church”; but “a Roman Catholic church,” “the Catholic church.”

## **rostered leader**

*Do not* use.

## **rostered minister**

Replaces rostered leader, includes ministers of Word and Service and ministers of Word and Sacrament.  
(*Updated 5/4/18*)

*see also* rosters

## **rosters**

**The roster of Ministers of Word and Service** and the **roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament**. Note that roster is lowercase when used in a sentence, e.g., The policies and procedures for granting retired status on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit. (*Updated 5/4/18*)

## **Russian Orthodox Church, the**

Capitalize “church” only when referring to a specific church or to the corporate title of a church body: “Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church,” “the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia”; but “a Russian Orthodox church.”

## **Russian Orthodoxy**

Capitalize.

**sabbath/Sabbath**

Capitalize when referring to Saturday or Sunday as a day of the week; lowercase when referring to a time of rest.

**sacrament/Sacrament**

Capitalize when used in the title of the rite:

“the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Otherwise lowercase:

The Lutheran church has two sacraments: baptism and communion.

Communion is a sacrament.

The gift of word and sacrament is from God.

**sacramental (adj.)**

Lowercase.

**Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the**

Capitalize when used as a title of the rite.

**Sacrament of Holy Communion, the**

Capitalize when used as a title of the rite.

**saint**

Abbreviate as “St.” for names of saints, cities and other places: “St. John,” “St. Paul, Minn.” “St. Lawrence Seaway”

*Exception:* “Saint Paul Area Synod.”

**same-gender (adj.)**

*Do not use* “same-sex”:

This law protects same-gender couples.

**Sanctus**

Capitalize.

**Satan**

Capitalize.

**satanic**

Lowercase.

**savior/Savior**

Capitalize only when referring to Jesus; may also be spelled “Saviour” in the name of a congregation.

**scholastic movement**

Lowercase.

**scholasticism**

Lowercase: “Protestant scholasticism,” “Thomistic scholasticism.”

**scholastics, the**

Lowercase.

**scribes**

Lowercase.

**scriptural**

Lowercase.

**scripture(s)/Scripture**

Capitalize when meaning the Bible or any portion of it:

The pastor quoted various portions of Scripture in his sermon.

Lowercase when referring to the sacred writings of a religious group: “the Hindu scriptures.”

**Scripture reference**

*see* “biblical text references” for specific examples of citations.

**seat of judgment**

Lowercase.

**second coming, the**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear.

**Second Vatican Council**

Also referred to as Vatican II; use “Second Vatican Council” in first usage; “Vatican II” in second and subsequent references.

**seder**

Lowercase.

**See**

Capitalize when referring to a specific see (religious jurisdiction): “the See of Constantinople,” “the Holy See.”

**senior**

*see* junior, senior

**senior citizen**

*Prefer* “older adult.” Usage may be appropriate in generic phrases that do not refer to specific individuals: “senior citizen discount.”

**separately incorporated ministries**

*see* titles of ELCA churchwide ministries and teams

**serial punctuation**

*Do not use* a comma before the conjunction in a simple series (e.g., a, b and c):

They bought apples, bananas and cherries.

*however:*

- If a serial comma would help with clarity, insert it:

We had juice, cereal, and ham and eggs.

- If any of the series terms themselves have a comma in them, use semicolons to separate:  
She was accompanied by her daughter, Jane, from Des Moines; her cousin, Alice, from Chicago; and her aunt, Bernice, from Minneapolis.
- *Use a comma* before the concluding conjunction in a complex series of phrases:  
The judges in the contest considered the originality of the submission, the creativity of the content, the illustrations, and the compliance with the stated theme.

*Note:* In legal, social statements and social messages, the ELCA unit may request use of the Oxford comma.

### **Sermon on the Mount**

*Note* capitalization treatment

### **serpent, the**

Lowercase.

### **Servant Songs, the**

[Isaiah 42:1-7](#); [Isaiah 49:1-6](#); [Isaiah 50:4-9](#); [Isaiah 52:13–53:12](#)

### **seven deadly sins**

Lowercase.

### **sevenfold**

Lowercase.

### **“simul justus et peccator”**

Translates from Latin as “at once justified and sinner.”

### **sister**

The abbreviation “Sr.” is acceptable in a list with names and titles.

### **Small Catechism**

Do not italicize or put in quotation marks.

### **social messages, ELCA**

*see* messages, ELCA

### **social policy resolutions**

Actions, other than social statements, of the Churchwide Assembly or Church Council on matters of social concern.

### **social statements, ELCA**

Use italics for titles of statements; the proper titles of the ELCA social statements and their dates of adoption by the Churchwide Assembly are ([elca.org/socialstatements](http://elca.org/socialstatements)):

- *Abortion* (1991)
- *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective* (1991)
- *The Death Penalty* (1991)
- *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (1993)
- *Freed in Christ: Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (1993)
- *For Peace in God’s World* (1995)

- *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* (1999)
- *Caring for Health: Our Shared Endeavor* (2003)
- *Our Calling in Education* (2007)
- *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (2009)
- *Genetics, Faith and Responsibility* (2011)
- *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* (2013)
- *Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action* (2019)

### **son/Son**

Capitalize only when referring to the second person of the Trinity.

### **Son of God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

### **spirit/Spirit**

Capitalize when referring to the third person of the Trinity.

### **Stand With Africa**

*Note:* the “w” in “With” is capitalized.

### **stanza**

The use of “stanza” is correct when used with most traditional hymnody, and “verse” is correct when referring to psalms (and other biblical references). A song that has a refrain has “verses” with the refrain. Examples are ELW 727 and 728: “Lord Christ, When First You Came to Earth” has four stanzas. “Blest Are They” has five verses and a refrain.

*see also* verse

### **state names**

- In running copy, spell out state names when used alone in a sentence:  
I grew up in Minnesota.  
*note:* State names should be abbreviated when a city is also mentioned:  
I grew up in Small Town, Minn.
- A comma follows the name of a state in city-state references and follows the name of a country in city-country references in text:  
The meeting was held in Columbus, Ohio, at Trinity Lutheran Seminary.  
The tour included Hamburg, Germany, among other European cities.
- If using an abbreviation, *do not use* postal codes (e.g., MN) in running text; the U.S. Postal Service’s abbreviations for the 50 states are designed to aid sorting of mail by machine; they should *not* be used in copy unless within the context of an address.

*see* Appendix 3 for a list of state abbreviations and postal codes

### **stations of the cross**

Lowercase.

### **sub**

In general, do not hyphenate after this prefix.

*see* prefix, sub-brands

**sub-brands (within the ELCA context)**

Hyphenate. Recognized fundraising programs within the ELCA that include the ELCA Foundation, ELCA Fund for Leaders, ELCA Global Church Sponsorship, ELCA Malaria Campaign, ELCA New Congregations, ELCA Vision for Mission, ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response.

**subcommittee**

*Do not* hyphenate.

**suffering servant/Suffering Servant**

Capitalize only when used as a title for Christ.

**Sunday school**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

**Sunday of the Passion**

Palm Sunday; beginning of Holy Week.

**Sundays of the church year**

In naming the Sundays of the church year, follow the style of “Evangelical Lutheran Worship,” pp. 18-53.

**supreme being/Supreme Being**

Capitalize only when referring to God.

**synod (n.)**

One of the three expressions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In first reference be sure to include “ELCA” in the name; capitalize when used with the name: “ELCA Upstate New York Synod.” Second reference: “the synod.” There are no official abbreviations for synod names, so *always* spell them out. Be sure to reference the correct geographic designations in the names of the synods.

*Note:* Do not use synodical: synod bishop, Synod Council, etc.

*see* Appendix 4 for a complete listing of ELCA synods

**Synod Assembly**

Capitalize when using the entire name, with or without the year:

I attended the 2009 Synod Assembly.

Lowercase if only “assembly” is used upon subsequent reference:

Important decisions are made during the Synod Assembly. During the assembly ....

**Synod Council**

The governing body of an ELCA synod. Capitalized similarly to “Church Council”; lowercase “council” when used alone.

**synod office**

Lowercase.

**synod-authorized worshiping communities (SAWCs)**

“Within the territory of each geographic synod, the synod—in keeping with criteria, policies and procedures proposed by the secretary of this church, after consultation with the appropriate churchwide unit or units, and approved by the Church Council—may acknowledge certain authorized worshiping communities such as developing ministries, preaching points, or chapels as related to the synod and part of the synod’s life and mission. Such authorized worshiping communities of the synod shall accept and adhere to the Confession of

Faith and Statement of Purpose of this church, shall be served by leadership under the criteria of this church, and shall be subject to the discipline of this church” (ELCA Constitution - churchwide bylaw 10.01.04.).

### **synodwide**

Lowercase; do not hyphenate.

### **synoptic gospels**

Lowercase.

### **Synoptics, the**

Capitalize.

### **tagline**

One word; part of the brandmark of the ELCA; the official, registered tagline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is:

“God’s work. Our hands.”

It should *never* appear as a headline or stand alone; it should *always* be capitalized and punctuated as illustrated above, whether in conjunction with the brandmark or in copy, in order to preserve its integrity and assist in brand identification. Find resources at [ELCA.org/dayofservice](http://ELCA.org/dayofservice); consult [ELCA.org/trademark](http://ELCA.org/trademark) for approved usage of the brandmark.

*see also* brandmark and God’s work. Our hands.

### **task force**

Capitalize only if entire name of the specific task force is used; lowercase in other instances:

The Communal Discernment Task Force held its annual meeting.

The work of the task force continues between meetings.

### **teenager**

*do not use*

*see* boy; girl; young adult; youth

### **telephone numbers**

Use hyphens in the number, *not* parentheses, periods or a slash; *note* the style when including an extension:

Call us at 773-380-0000, ext. 234, to receive a copy.

### **temple/Temple**

Capitalize only when naming a specific temple: “the Temple of Solomon,” “the Second Temple.”

### **temptation, the**

Lowercase.

### **Ten Commandments**

Capitalize; *do not use* “10 Commandments.”

### **tenebrae/Tenebrae**

Capitalize only when part of a formal title.

### **text of a hymn, hymn text**

Use instead of “lyrics.”

## **thankoffering**

One word; lowercase.

## **Third World nation**

*Do not use*; instead use the specific name of the hemisphere or area that is referenced.

*Note*: in contemporary usage, “Third World” carries “economic” implications, meaning nonindustrialized or economically poor by Western economic standards. *Never* use “developing” as a modifier for a church or a group of people—terms such as “underdeveloped” or “developed” oversimplify a nation’s status based on economic or material terms. In this usage, nations are measured by purely Western standards, and other dimensions of human community and values are overlooked.

## **Three Days, the**

Begins with the Maundy Thursday evening liturgy and ends with Easter Day evening prayer. Easter Day is the last day of the Paschal Triduum and the first day of the Easter season.

## **Three in One**

Trinity; refers to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

## **time**

- Use numerals except for noon and midnight
- Lowercase “a.m.” and “p.m.”:  
We meet at 2 p.m.
- *Avoid* redundancies: write  
We will meet at 7 p.m. today.  
*not* “We will meet tonight at 7:00 p.m.”
- use numerals to express length of time  
Allow 2 minutes for discussion.

## **time of the church, the**

The nonfestival part of the church year, including the time after Pentecost and often the time after Epiphany; also referred to as Ordinary Time

## **timeline**

*One* word when the meaning is schedule of events or equivalent of timetable:

The timeline for development of the health-care social statement listed the meeting dates.

## **time line**

*Two* words when the meaning is time chart as in a table listing important events for successive years or groups of years within a particular period:

The time line of major religious events in past millennia highlighted the importance of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in the 16th century.

## **titles of compositions**

*Includes book titles, magazine titles, movie titles, opera titles, play titles, album titles, radio and television program titles.*

Use italic type; capitalize principal words, including prepositions and conjunctions of four or more letters; capitalize articles or words of fewer than four letters if it is the first or last word in a title. Use roman type and quotes for chapter titles, hymn titles).

*Exceptions per AP Style include* the Bible and books that are primarily catalogs of reference material (e.g., almanacs, directories, dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, handbooks and similar publications).

“Stewards of Love”; “Stories of Faith in Action”; *but*

ELCA Good Gifts catalog; Our Global Church annual directory

### **titles of ELCA churchwide staff**

In editorial text, prefer the title after the name: “Jane Doe, executive director for ...”

For signature blocks in business letters, put the capitalized title of the person on a second line with the unit or program name as appropriate

Jane Doe

Executive Director, {Unit}

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### **titles of ELCA churchwide ministries and teams**

Generally these terms are to be used only in internal references. When possible in public documents, refer to the work of the ELCA rather than a specific unit; when used, be sure to include “ELCA.”

Teams or areas of ministry include (see teams in Paylocity for a complete and current list):

#### **Operations**

Office of the Presiding Bishop

Assistant to the Presiding Bishop/Executive for Administration

Strategic Communications

Strategy

Facilities

Office of the Secretary

General Counsel *or* Legal

Archives

Synod Relations

Meeting Management

Governance

Office of the Treasurer

Budget and unit accounting

Management

Controller

Customer Service Information Technology

People Solutions

Development

Philanthropy

Congregation Stewardship and Generosity

Marketing and Communications

Gift Planning

Mission Funding

Mission Support

Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Relations and Theological Discernment

#### **Innovation**

#### **Christian Community and Leadership**

Worship

Federal Chaplaincy

Campus ministry

Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities  
International Leaders Program  
Young Adults in Global Mission  
Youth Gathering  
Children, youth and young adult ministries  
Disabilities and deaf ministries  
New ministries  
Congregational Vitality Training and Development  
Directors for Evangelical Mission

### **Independent Lutheran Organizations that relate to ELCA Christian Community and Leadership**

Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators, Inc.  
Evangelical Lutheran Education Association  
Lutheran Men in Mission  
National Lutheran Campus Ministry, Inc.

### **Service and Justice**

ELCA World Hunger  
AMMPARO  
Lutheran Disaster Response  
ELCA global mission desks  
Witnessing in Society (advocacy)

### **Organizations that relate to ELCA Service and Justice**

Deaconess Community of the ELCA  
Independent Lutheran Organizations and social ministries engaged in efforts related to service, justice, and global mission  
Service, justice, and global mission efforts of full communion churches

### **Separately incorporated ministries:**

1517 Media (Constitutional title: Publishing House of the ELCA)  
ELCA Foundation  
Portico Benefit Services (Constitutional title: Board of Pensions of the ELCA)  
Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA  
Women of the ELCA

### **Torah**

The five books of Moses, which constitute the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

### **Tower of Babel**

Capitalize.

### **toward**

*Do not use “towards.”*

**trademark**

*Avoid* using trademark names as a general reference to a particular type of product:

I used a sticky note to leave him a message.

*not* “I used a Post-It note to leave him a message.”

**transfiguration**

Capitalize only when the meaning is otherwise unclear or when referring to the festival on the last Sunday before Lent: “the Transfiguration of Our Lord” or “Transfiguration.”

**transgender**

*see* LGBTQ

**Triannual, triennial**

*See* biannual

**tribe/Tribe**

Usually lowercase: “the tribe of Judah,” “tribes of Israel.” Capitalize when used with an American Indian name: “Dakota Tribe.”

**tribes, tribal**

*Avoid* in general usage. Many Africans are very sensitive about being identified along tribal lines; the word “tribe” also carries connotations of primitiveness. *Avoid* “tribal” as well unless used by the people themselves. Identify a person by nationality or, in some circumstances, by ethnic group or language instead.

*Note:* for American Indians, “tribe” is acceptable, but “nation” is *preferred*.

**triduum, the**

Translates from Latin as “three days.” Lowercase, but capitalize in “Paschal Triduum.”

*see* Three Days, the

**trinitarian/Trinitarian**

Capitalize only when referring to the Trinitarian Controversy.

**Trinity**

Capitalize.

**Trinity season**

*Prefer* “time after Pentecost.”

**triune God**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

**tune names**

In hymnody, to indicate a tune name, use small caps and appropriate capitalization, no quotation marks:

ADESTE FIDELES

EIN FESTE BURG

**Twelve, the**

Refers to the 12 disciples; capitalize.

## **twelve days of Christmas, the**

*Note* capitalization treatment.

## **Twelve Steps**

The 12 stages of recovery that are used by Alcoholics Anonymous and similar support groups; capitalize. Also “Twelve Step program.”

## **unchurched**

Use as an adjective only:

Unchurched people make up 40% of the U.S. population.

Do not equate unchurched people with non-Christians. “Unchurched” describes people who are not active in or members of a congregation; they may or may not be baptized.

## **undesignated**

*Preferred* over “unrestricted” in fundraising materials

## **United Church of Christ**

A full communion partner with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

## **United Methodist Church, The**

A full communion partner with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

## **United States/U.S.**

Spell out if used as a noun;

*preferred* use of abbreviation is as an adjective; use periods and no space between letters: “U.S. Senate.”

## **unrestricted**

*see* “undesignated”

## **upper room, the**

Lowercase.

## **URL/URLs**

Acronym for uniform resource locator, an Internet address.

- In running text or HTML e-blasts, use roman type, no italics, capitalize ELCA in promotional items. Go to [www.ELCA.org/globalmission](http://www.ELCA.org/globalmission) for more information.
- when the URL stands alone, and is not intended to be hyperlinked, use roman type, no underscore, no “www”:  
[ELCA.org/globalmission](http://ELCA.org/globalmission)
- *Avoid*, if possible, listing a URL at the end of the sentence. If there is no way to rewrite, add ending punctuation; do not add a space between the URL and the ending punctuation.
- When the URL breaks at the end of a line of copy, do not add any punctuation, such as a hyphen, lest that hyphen be taken as part of the URL; try to break the URL in a logical place: between words, after existing punctuation, and the like.

## **vacation Bible school**

Only the word Bible is capitalized.

## **Vatican II**

Use “Second Vatican Council” on first reference; “Vatican II” for second and subsequent references.

## **verse**

Refers to a portion of Scripture; “v.” and “vv.” Are the abbreviations for “verse” and “verses”; the abbreviation is followed by a space and the verse number(s): “v. 2,” “vv. 4–8”; use “stanza” when referring to hymnody

*see also* stanza

## **vespers**

*see* evening prayer

## **Veterans Day**

Capitalize and use apostrophe appropriately.

## **victim**

*Generally do not use.*

*see* disease

## **vigil/Vigil**

Capitalize when meaning is Easter Vigil or Pentecost Vigil; lowercase all other uses.

## **Vigil of Easter**

*see* Easter Vigil

## **virgin birth**

Lowercase.

## **Virgin Mary**

*Note* capitalization.

## **Virgin, the**

*Note* capitalization.

## **visitation/Visitation**

Capitalize only when referring to the commemoration on May 31; but *preferred* name for that commemoration is “Visit of Mary to Elizabeth.”

## **voting member**

Use in the context of a Churchwide Assembly or Synod Assembly. *Do not use* “delegate” in this context; attendees of these assemblies are not “delegates” from their synod and as such, may make their own decisions, based upon careful examination of the issue at hand. However, in referring to the Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention, “delegate” is the proper term as they are sent on behalf of the sending entity.

## **Web addresses**

*prefer* “URL.”

## **website**

One word, no hyphen; lowercase.

**White (adj.)**

Lowercase: white Americans

**Wise Men, the**

*Preferred* term is “the magi.”

**woman**

Use for any adult women; don’t use “female.”

*see also* adult; girl; young adult; youth

**Women of the ELCA**

The proper name for the women’s organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; *do not use* “WELCA,” “W/ELCA” or “*the* Women of the ELCA.”

*see* Appendix 5 for Women of the ELCA style sheet

**word/Word**

Capitalize only as a synonym for Christ:

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

But “God’s word to Moses,” “word of God,” “the word of the Lord.”

**word and sacrament(s)**

Lowercase:

The gift of word and sacrament is from God.

*Note:* The roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

**Word Incarnate**

Capitalize when referring to Jesus; but “the incarnate Word.”

**works-righteousness**

Hyphenate.

**World Hunger**

*Prefer* “ELCA World Hunger.”

**worshiped, worshipping**

*Preferred* spelling is with one “p”: “the worshipping congregation.”

*Example* of proper usage:

Last Sunday 324 people worshiped with us.

*Not* Last Sunday we worshiped 324 people.

**writings/Writings**

Capitalize only as a division of Jewish scriptures: “Law, Prophets, Writings.”

**Yahweh**

*Preferred* usage, also “YHWH”; *preferred* over “Jehovah.”

*Avoid* “Jahweh.”

**year**

*see* centuries; dates; decades

**young adult**

A person between the ages of 18 and 30.

*see also* adult; boy; girl; man; woman; youth

**youth**

Refers to individuals ages 12 to 18. For those under age 12 use “boy” and “girl”; “young man” or “young woman” are also possible terms; at age 18 everyone is a “man,” “woman,” or “young adult.”

*see also* adult; boy; girl; man; woman; young adult

**Youth Gathering**

*See* ELCA Youth Gathering

**zealot/Zealot**

Capitalize when referring to the fanatical first-century group of individuals who wanted to overthrow the Romans; otherwise, lowercase.

## Appendix 1

### Credit Lines/Copyright Information for Key Resources

#### Versions of the Bible:

The following Bible translation copyright acknowledgment lines may be used without further permission if stated conditions in italics are met. Permission must be requested if conditions are exceeded. (NOTE: “<” means that the total word count quoted from that source is less than the indicated amount of words; “≤” means the total word count is equal to or less than the amount indicated.) **The NRSV is the preferred version of the Bible for use in the ELCA.** If it is necessary, in a particular context, to quote from another version of the Bible, reasoning for this deviation from the standard should be provided when the document is submitted to Strategic Communications for editorial review as well as an indication of which version is being used.

*Note:* Acronyms as listed below are allowed for use in biblical credits and citations; **this is an exception to the style that restricts the use of acronyms in general.**

#### **Amplified Bible: Old Testament**

*< 50 verses; no major portion of our publication or of Bible book*

Scripture is taken from the Amplified Bible: Old Testament, copyright © 1962, 1964 by Zondervan Publishing House. Used by permission.

#### **Amplified New Testament**

*< 50 verses; no major portion of our publication or of Bible book*

Scripture quotations are from the Amplified New Testament, copyright © 1954, 1958 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

#### **Contemporary English Version**

*< 500 verses; < 50% of a Bible book & < 25% of our text content*

Scripture quotations are from the Contemporary English Version, copyright © 1991, 1992, 1995 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

#### **Dios Habla Hoy, La Biblia Versión Popular**

*must send them notice of usage*

Dios Habla Hoy, La Biblia Versión Popular, texto copyright © 1966, 1970, 1979, 1983 Sociedades Biblicas Unidas. Usado con permiso.

#### **Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's English Version**

*≤ 250 verses; no complete book; <25% of content*

Scripture taken from the Good News for Modern Man: The New Testament in Today's English Version – Third Edition. Copyright © 1971 by American Bible Society. Used by permission.

#### **Holy Bible, New Living Translation (NLT)**

*≤ 250 verses; no complete book; ≤ 20% of content*

One of the following credit lines must appear on the copyright page or title page of the work: Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

#### **Jerusalem Bible**

*< 2500 words; < 1/3 of content of publication*

Excerpts from The Jerusalem Bible, copyright © 1966 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd., and Doubleday & Co. Inc. Used by permission of the publisher.

#### **Living Bible**

*< 250 verses; no complete book; < 20% of content*

Scripture verses are taken from The Living Bible, copyright © 1971. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved.

**The Message**

≤ 500 verses; no complete book; <25% of content  
Scripture quotations from The Message. Copyright  
© by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995. Used  
by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

**Modern Language Bible: The Berkeley  
Version in Modern English**

≤ 100 verses; no “major portion” of our  
publication/Bible book

Scripture is taken from The Modern Language  
Bible: The Berkeley Version in Modern English,  
copyright © 1945, 1959, 1969 Zondervan  
Publishing House. Used by permission.

**New American Bible**

≤ 2500 words

Scripture texts used in this work are taken from the  
New American Bible, copyright © 1970 by the  
Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington,  
D.C., are used by permission of the copyright  
owner. All rights reserved.

**New American Standard Bible**

≤ 500 verses; must notify of use

Scripture quotations are from the New American  
Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963,  
1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 The Lockman  
Foundation. Used by permission.

**New Century Version**

Scriptures quoted from (title of Bible), New  
Century Version, copyright © 1991 by Word  
Publishing, Dallas, Texas 75234. All rights  
reserved.

**New English Bible**

≤ 100 verses

Scripture is from The New English Bible, copyright  
© 1961, 1970 by the Delegates of the Oxford  
University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge  
University Press. Reprinted by permission.

**New International Version**

≤ 500 verses; no complete book; < 25% of content

Scripture is taken from the Holy Bible, New  
International Version®, copyright © 1973, 1978,  
1984 International Bible Society. Used by  
permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All  
rights reserved.

*note:* The “NIV” and “New International Version”  
trademarks are registered in the U.S. Patent and  
Trademark Office by International Bible Society.

Use of either trademark requires the permission of  
International Bible Society.

**New Jerusalem Bible**

< 2500 words; < 1/3 of content of publication

Excerpts from The New Jerusalem Bible, copyright  
© 1985 by Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., and  
Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell  
Publishing Group Inc. Reprinted by permission.

**New King James Version**

≤ 250 verses; no complete book; < 50% of content

Scripture is taken from The New King James  
Version, copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 Thomas  
Nelson Inc. Used by permission. All rights  
reserved.

**New Revised Standard Version Bible  
(NRSV)**

≤ 500 verses; no complete book; <50% of content

Scripture is from the New Revised Standard  
Version Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of  
Christian Education of the National Council of the  
Churches of Christ in the United States of America.  
All rights reserved. Used with permission.

*note:* The NRSV is the preferred version for usage in  
the ELCA

**New Testament in Modern English (Phillips)**

≤ 15 verses

Scripture is from The New Testament in Modern  
English, copyright © 1958 by J. B. Phillips. Used  
by permission of the Macmillan Co., New York.

**Revised English Bible**

≤ 100 verses

Scripture is from the Revised English Bible,  
copyright © 1989 by the Oxford and Cambridge  
University Presses. Used by permission.

**Revised Standard Version Bible**

< 500 verses; no entire book; < 50% of our  
content

Scripture is from the Revised Standard Version of  
the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971 by the  
Division of Christian Education of the National  
Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used  
by permission.

**Tanakh**

*no entire book; < 50% of our content*

Scripture quotations are from “The Tanakh: The New Jewish Publication Society Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text” copyright © 1985 by the Jewish Publication Society. Used by permission.

**Today's English Version (TEV)**

*see “Good News for Modern Man” listing*

**Other Commonly Quoted References:****Eerdman's Bible Dictionary**

*< 400 words*

The Eerdman's Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987)

**Revised Common Lectionary**

Excerpts marked RCL are from the Revised Common Lectionary copyright © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts (CCT), admin. Augsburg Fortress. Reproduced by permission.

**Worship Resources:****Evangelical Lutheran Worship**

Excerpts marked ELW are from Evangelical Lutheran Worship copyright © 2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Reproduced by permission.

**All Creation Sings**

Excerpts marked ACS are from All Creation Sings copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress, an imprint of 1517 Media. Reproduced by permission. Reproduced by permission.

**Lutheran Book of Worship**

Excerpts marked LBW are from Lutheran Book of Worship copyright © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Reproduced by permission.

**This Far by Faith**

Excerpts marked TFF are from This Far by Faith copyright © 1999 Augsburg Fortress. Reproduced by permission.

**With One Voice**

Excerpts marked WOV are from With One Voice copyright © 1995 Augsburg Fortress. Reproduced by permission.

**Libro de Liturgia y Cántico**

Excerpts marked LLC are from Libro de Liturgia y Cántico © 1998 Augsburg Fortress. Reproduced by permission.

**Luther's Small Catechism** (credit line is

specific for the translation that is published in Evangelical Lutheran Worship pew edition and separately in Small Catechism study and pocket editions) Small Catechism excerpts are from Luther's Small Catechism with Evangelical Lutheran Worship Texts, © 1994, 2008 Augsburg Fortress. Reproduced by permission.

## Appendix 2

# ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response Style Sheet

### ELCA World Hunger

- When referring to the program, use the official name, “ELCA World Hunger,” never “World Hunger.”
- “ELCA World Hunger” is the umbrella term for interunit churchwide, synodical, and congregational programs, events and activities — both program and appeal.
- The “ELCA World Hunger” brandmark is used for both ELCA World Hunger program and appeal.
- Use “ELCA World Hunger program” for rare, internal communication when referring to the programmatic arm of ELCA World Hunger; this usage is also appropriate when referring to a staff position or title
- Key message: ELCA World Hunger addresses the root causes of hunger and poverty through a program of relief, development, education, advocacy and lifestyle stewardship  
*never* use “the” before “ELCA World Hunger”

### Lutheran Disaster Response

- Lutheran Disaster Response refers to both Lutheran Disaster Response International and Lutheran Disaster Response U.S.
- The Lutheran Disaster Response brandmark is used for both Lutheran Disaster Response International and Lutheran Disaster Response U.S.
- *Note:* for designated disasters, 100% of donations designated for a specific disaster are used for that disaster’s immediate relief and long-term recovery efforts. Should a response become fully funded, additional designated gifts will be applied to similar international or domestic response efforts. For a listing of disasters accepting designated donations, visit [ELCA.org/giving](https://www.elca.org/giving)
- Key messages include: “In it for the long haul,” “Prepared to care,” “Sharing hope” and “Immediate relief and long-term recovery”

### Lutheran Disaster Response U.S.

- This refers to the ELCA’s program and fund responding to major natural and human-caused disasters in the United States and the Caribbean.
- When communicating with an ELCA-specific audience or soliciting funds from ELCA members, refer to Lutheran Disaster Response U.S. (remember “United States” includes the Caribbean).

**Sample relationship language**

ELCA World Hunger	works <b>internationally</b> through	The Lutheran World Federation and companion churches to support/enable ...
	works <b>domestically</b> through	hunger grant recipients to support/enable ...
	OR supports/enables [name of partner or project]	
Lutheran Disaster Response	is a <b>member</b> of Action by Churches Together, The Lutheran World Federation, Church World Service	works <b>with</b> global companions
	works <b>through</b> local churches, local affiliate[name of social ministry organization]	in <b>coordination with</b> synods

### Appendix 3

## State Abbreviations and Postal Codes

<u>State/Territory Name</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Postal Code</u>
Alabama	Ala.	AL
Alaska	Alaska	AK
Arizona	Ariz.	AZ
Arkansas	Ark.	AR
California	Calif.	CA
Colorado	Colo.	CO
Connecticut	Conn.	CT
Delaware	Del.	DE
District of Columbia	D.C.	DC
Florida	Fla.	FL
Guam	Guam	GU
Georgia	Ga.	GA
Hawaii	Hawaii	HI
Idaho	Idaho	ID
Iowa	Iowa	IA
Illinois	Ill.	IL
Indiana	Ind.	IN
Kansas	Kan.	KS
Kentucky	Ky.	KY
Louisiana	La.	LA
Maine	Maine	ME
Maryland	Md.	MD
Massachusetts	Mass.	MA
Michigan	Mich.	MI
Minnesota	Minn.	MN
Mississippi	Miss.	MS
Missouri	Mo.	MO
Montana	Mont.	MT

<u>State/Territory Name</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Postal Code</u>
Nebraska	Neb.	NE
Nevada	Nev.	NV
New Hampshire	N.H.	NH
New Jersey	N.J.	NJ
New Mexico	N.M.	NM
New York	N.Y.	NY
North Carolina	N.C.	NC
North Dakota	N.D.	ND
Ohio	Ohio	OH
Oklahoma	Okla.	OK
Oregon	Ore.	OR
Pennsylvania	Pa.	PA
Puerto Rico	Puerto Rico	PR
Rhode Island	R.I.	RI
South Carolina	S.C.	SC
South Dakota	S.D.	SD
Tennessee	Tenn.	TN
Texas	Texas	TX
Utah	Utah	UT
Vermont	Vt.	VT
Virgin Islands (US)	Virgin Islands	VI
Virginia	Va.	VA
Washington	Wash.	WA
Wisconsin	Wis.	WI
West Virginia	W.Va.	WV
Wyoming	Wyo.	WY

## Appendix 4

### ELCA synod names

Alaska Synod	Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Allegheny Synod	Northwest Washington Synod
Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod	Northwestern Minnesota Synod
Caribbean Synod	Northwestern Ohio Synod
Central States Synod	Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod
Central/Southern Illinois Synod	Oregon Synod
Delaware-Maryland Synod	Pacifica Synod
East-Central Synod of Wisconsin	Rocky Mountain Synod
Eastern North Dakota Synod	Saint Paul Area Synod
Florida-Bahamas Synod	Sierra Pacific Synod
Grand Canyon Synod	Slovak Zion Synod
Greater Milwaukee Synod	South Carolina Synod
Indiana-Kentucky Synod	South Dakota Synod
La Crosse Area Synod	South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Lower Susquehanna Synod	Southeast Michigan Synod
Metropolitan Chicago Synod	Southeastern Iowa Synod
Metropolitan New York Synod	Southeastern Minnesota Synod
Metropolitan Washington, D.C., Synod	Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod
Minneapolis Area Synod	Southeastern Synod
Montana Synod	Southern Ohio Synod
Nebraska Synod	Southwest California Synod
New England Synod	Southwestern Minnesota Synod
New Jersey Synod	Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod
North Carolina Synod	Southwestern Texas Synod
North/West Lower Michigan Synod	Southwestern Washington Synod
Northeastern Iowa Synod	Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Northeastern Minnesota Synod	Upper Susquehanna Synod
Northeastern Ohio Synod	Upstate New York Synod
Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod	Virginia Synod
Northern Great Lakes Synod	West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod
Northern Illinois Synod	Western Iowa Synod
Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod	Western North Dakota Synod
Northwest Intermountain Synod	

*NOTE:* There are no acronyms for synod names; the synod name should always be spelled out as presented here.

## Appendix 5

### Women of the ELCA style sheet

Many common words with specific meanings are used within Women of the ELCA. Here are some definitions and style standards.

#### ***Café: Stirring the Spirit Within***

The monthly online magazine for young women.

#### **churchwide executive board**

This group of 17 board members and four officers (elected by the triennial convention for a three-year term) serves as the board of directors and as the interim legislative authority between triennial conventions.

#### **circle**

A group within a congregational unit — usually for the purpose of such program activities as Bible study, fellowship and personal growth — which meets regularly and supports the purpose of the organization.

#### **cluster**

A grouping of congregational, intercongregational and special units within the territory of a synod women's organization; also known as a "conference" in some areas.  
*Note: do not use "district."*

#### **conference**

A grouping of congregational, intercongregational and special units within the territory of a synod women's organization; also known as a "cluster" in some areas.  
*Note: do not use "district."*

#### **congregational unit**

A member of Women of the ELCA; a community of women coming together for study, support and action in local and other settings of Women of the ELCA; also referred to as a unit.  
*Note: the member of Women of the ELCA is the unit, not the individual participants.*

#### **delegate**

The organization sends delegates to the triennial convention, not voting members.

#### **Gather magazine**

As of September 2011 this is the name of the monthly magazine sent to all subscribers.

#### **Lutheran Woman Today magazine**

Please use "magazine" when describing this publication; former monthly publication of the Women of the ELCA, replaced by *Gather*  
*note* the proper name is "Woman," not "Women."

#### **memorial**

A statement of facts presented to a legislative body that is the basis for a petition or request for action; the way in which one organization formally makes a request of another, brought to a synodical women's organization convention by a unit or to a triennial convention by a synodical women's organization.

#### **participant**

Woman who takes part in carrying out the mission of and supports the ministries of Women of the ELCA; not all women in an ELCA congregation are automatically participants in Women of the ELCA; only those who take part in carrying out the mission of the organization and support the ministries of Women of the ELCA are participants.

#### **serial commas**

*Note* that the magazine of the Women of the ELCA uses the serial comma.

#### **special unit**

A member of Women of the ELCA; women who come together in special settings as authorized by the executive board, who are not affiliated with a congregation (such as on a college campus or in a retirement center).

#### **synodical women's organization (SWO)**

Legislative and programmatic expression of Women of the ELCA that assists congregational, intercongregational and special units within its

territory to fulfill the purpose of Women of the ELCA; there is a SWO in each synod of the ELCA

### **triennial convention**

The convention of Women of the ELCA; the highest legislative authority of the organization; meets every three years.

*Note:* this is different from a “triennial gathering”

### **URLs**

When they occur in copy they are roman and not underscored.

### **website**

The official website of the Women of the ELCA is [womenoftheelca.org](http://womenoftheelca.org).

### **Women of the ELCA**

This is the shortened form for “Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,” the legal name of the women’s organization of the ELCA; *always* spell out Women of the ELCA; *never* use WELCA or Welca; Women of the ELCA is *never* preceded by “the.”