

ECW's that want to thrive with health and vitality need to consider the following:

1. Stop and look at what you are doing as an ECW organization. Are you addressing the felt needs of women in your church? What are these needs? Are you doing things the same way you did ten years ago? In the face of rapid changes, you cannot stand still. You must adapt to changing needs, be flexible, be creative and give yourselves permission to do it differently.
2. ECW leadership must periodically go into retreat to pray together for guidance, reflect on the current scenario, evaluate and plan.
3. Remember that not all ECWs should look alike. The days of handbooks with a single model for ECWs are over. Each group should reflect the needs of the location.
4. Strong ECWs are not duplicating activities that are currently being provided at their churches. They address needs not being offered. They talk to women they would like to attract and listen...really listen.
5. Healthy ECWs understand the purpose of their organizations. They often have written mission statements expressing this purpose and organize and evaluate everything they do around these statements. They are closely in tune with the mission and vision of their particular church.
6. Smart ECWs work closely with their clergy. They express the desire to be a part of the clergy's and vestry's vision for the church. They are mutually supportive and are vocal about that support.
7. ECWs with vitality have a team leadership approach. These teams work together and support each other. They assist one another in weak areas and encourage ministry well done and celebrate successes. They work together as Sisters in Christ to love each other, rise above pettiness, hostile criticism and backbiting.
8. Productive ECWs have well-defined ministries. Persons are given written job descriptions and know the time limits to their commitments. They are given opportunities to repeat the job if they desire or bow out at the appropriate commitment end.
9. ECWs enjoying success do not mix business with pleasure. Business meetings are held independent of programs, retreats, etc., but are open to all interested persons.
10. ECW business meetings are organized and well run, but sensitive to the persons participating. Significant prayer and devotional time are built into the meetings. If possible, intercessory prayers and sharing time are included at the end of the meeting.

How to Start or Participate in a National Episcopal Church Women Group

11. Creative, well-planned retreats and quiet days are central to the activities of healthy groups. In addition, activities that focus on building community among the women are critical. Small groups of women who meet regularly for study, prayer and fellowship are key to larger groups addressing the spiritual needs of women.
12. Outreach ministry beyond the walls of the church is extremely important to successful groups.
13. Strong groups do not let "Martha" type activities and fundraising dominate their agendas.
14. Communication is key. The most effective ways to communicate information are:
 - face to face
 - text
 - email
 - telephone
 - announcements in church bulletins and newsletters
 - signs and posters
 - Facebook and other social media sites

Remember:

Women gather today for inspiration, education, fellowship, fun and opportunities to escape a frantic lifestyle. Our uniqueness is grounded in being Christian women in community with each other.

A quick evaluation measure - How does your ECW measure up? The time, talent and treasure of a healthy ECW organization will fall into these categories: 1/3 inreach activities, 1/3 outreach activities, 1/3 spiritual growth activities.

Inreach - "Martha" activities that benefit the church, including fundraising that is spent on the church.

Outreach - Anything given outside the walls of the church including time and fundraising.

Spiritual Growth - Worship, religious education, sharing, intimate fellowship, quiet days, retreats.