Vol 37, Issue 3
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WALKING IN THE WORD

"Now Thank We All Our God"



As my husband and I drove through Iowa and through parts of Minnesota in late October, I thought of the hymn "Now Thank We All Our God." (ELW 840). When I saw the farmers in the fields combining their corn and beans, I thought of the bounty that we celebrate every year and take for granted. Yes, it is a hymn that has been around for hundreds of years, but the words speak to me.

"Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us,
And keep us all in grace, and guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all harm in this world and the next"

God is near to us; He cheers and guides us during the good times and the perplexing times.

The year is moving swiftly along. Our last issue was before the Triennial Convention and Gathering. In this issue you will have an opportunity to see pictures from the Gathering and read about some attendees' experiences and memories of their time in Des Moines.

Prior to the fun at the Gathering, the voting members met via zoom to handle the business portion of Women of the ELCA. There are several articles in this issue about the business meeting. Please pay close attention to the article about the constitutional changes.

The Board is busy planning the 2027 convention, with the theme "…. Love your neighbor as yourself." Based upon Mark 12:31. It is going to be a wonderful time full of learning, worship, singing and fellowship. Mark your calendar for July 30 – August 1st. We are still very hopeful that two ladies from our companion synod in Papua New Guinea can join us for the weekend. Please see Karen's article about the upcoming convention!

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Our ladies across the synod have been busy helping others – by making quilts and many different types of kits. We are so thankful for the many hands that make this project a reality. Please see the article about Lutheran World Relief for more details. The totals are impressive.

As we gather with our families this Thanksgiving to thank God for all his blessings, I will be saying an extra prayer of thanks for you, the Central States Women of the ELCA. Without your hard work, devotion, prayers and offerings, we would not be able to accomplish so much in His name.

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, President

Reflections of the 13th Triennial Convention
July 13 – 14, 2026



Central States Synod Attendees

At our 2025 Synodical Convention, four ladies were elected as Voting Members to the 13th Triennial Convention. Jean Bardy, Janice Gerken, Gaye Mizell and Rhonda Templing were elected to represent us at the convention. Louise Ahrens, President, also attended.

In preparing the voting members for the two-day zoom convention, the churchwide board held four sessions prior to the convention. The first session addressed the process of each voting member setting up an identification passcode, navigating the log-in process, and, most importantly, the negotiation of the voting process.

Following the initial session, three additional sessions were held addressing the proposed budget, the proposed changes to the constitution, and the resolutions and memorials. Information regarding each was reviewed with voting members being allowed time to ask questions. These advance preparations for the convention were most helpful in expediting the business during the zoom convention held on Monday, July 13 and Tuesday, July 14, 2026.

On July 13, the convention opened with 223 voting members logging into the first-time zoom convention of the Women of the ELCA. The convention proceedings generally flowed smoothly. The explanations by the president and the board members were very helpful in guiding the voting members through the voting issues. [The only issue was the 'down time' as the board collaborated regarding the various issues. If the convention had been held in-person, those 'down times' would have been filled with speakers or group singing.]

The voting for the proposed constitutional changes went well. There was an exception in Article 9, Section 5, Item 2. It was proposed that each synodical women's organizations elect one voting member for every 50 congregations (previously every 25 congregations). It was noted that such a change would save $175,000 as it would decrease the voting members to about 74. This measure failed 65% to 35%.

There were ten Memorials under consideration, all of which were passed. All the Memorials can be found on the Women of the ELCA website (www.womenoftheelca.org), under Tools for Leaders. We encourage you to read these memorials. Two of the ten were from our 2025 Synodical Convention, Memorial 5: Unification of Women Around the Intent of the Gospel and Memorial 6: Raising Up Healthy Women and Girls.

Of the ten Memorials, there were three powerful and eye-opening ones: Memorial 7: Raise Awareness of Indian Boarding Schools (received 98% 'yes' votes), and Memorial 8: Raise Awareness of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (received 99% 'yes' votes). The memorials reminded many of the efforts on the part of the Women of the ELCA, which was made to raise awareness to the issue of human trafficking.

Memorial 10: Period Poverty reminded us of the many young girls and women in poverty who do not have access to menstrual supplies. The memorial encourages donations of such supplies to food banks, women's shelters, and the homeless organizations.

Please look for further information about the memorials in future issues of Walking in the Word. All the voting members stated it was a great learning experience!

Most inspiring was the Bible Study (Psalm 139) led by Pastor LeeAnn Stubbs. The theme of the study was "I am Somebody". She noted that women have pockets filled with gifts to share. She added that there has been long been inequality between women and men. Pastor Stubbs noted that for centuries men's clothing had pockets, whereas women's clothing did not!!

submitted by Louise Ahrens, President
along with thoughts from Janice Gerken, Secretary and Gayle Mizell, Board member

Triennial Convention News!

Many items were voted on at the 13th Triennial Convention. There is so much information to share. While all of it is important, I wanted to share with you the changes to the constitutions. There were three constitutions that were changed:

The Churchwide Organization
The Synodical Women's Organization
The Congregational or Intercongregational Units

All the constitutions can be found on the Women of the ELCA website: www.womenoftheelca.org. Under tools for leaders, scroll down to the constitutions. The link to the above website can be found on the Central States Website (www.css-elca.org) under Ministries, Women of the ECLA.

All the changes to the constitutions are in effect and no vote will be needed at the Synodical or unit level.

At our last Board meeting, we discussed the four main changes to the Synodical Women's Organization's Constitution. We want you to be aware of these main changes, which are listed below:

Article VI, Section 2, Item 1 – Representation
Change made to extend representation up to two voting members from each Congregation/unit.

Article VII, Section 1, item 1 – Composition and Authority
The board will consist of SWO leaders, together with three or more elected board members. No more than two people from the same unit can serve on the SWO board.

Article VII, Section 4, Item 2 – Officers in General
No SWO leaders can hold the same position for more than three consecutive terms.

Article VII, Section 4, Item 4 – Officers in General
No elected person shall serve as a SWO leader or board member for more than seven years.

Please note that Article VI, Section 2, Item 1, which is in **Bold**, is something that needs to be taken into consideration when deciding who will be the voting members for our upcoming Synodical Convention. In the past there has been one voting member. Now each unit can have two.

The units/intercongregational units also have a new constitution. The constitution is very similar to the previous one. Each unit can define the duties of their leaders and the financial plan, including a budget. We encourage each unit to start using this constitution immediately. The document is found in word form on the Women of the ELCA website, mentioned above. Once you review, if you have any questions any of the board members can assist you. Their contact information is listed on the last page of this issue. Of course, you can reach out to me at any time with further questions. All of us are happy to assist.

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, President,

Scholarship Recipients Enjoy Triennial Gathering Experience

All recipients of the Barbara Nelson Scholarship who attended this summer's Triennial Gathering have shared that it was a positive and informative experience. **Pastor Brenda Rodger** experienced what most do when they attend for the first time, stating she was "surprised by the magnitude of the event". **Carol Flanders** said that she will always remember the "joy of being surrounded by so many Lutheran women lifting their voices together in worship". **Pat Dunavan** pointed out the variety of exhibitors and vendors available and the opportunity to assist with quilt making for Lutheran World Relief. **Joyce Uber** remembered the many opportunities she had to meet and chat with women from Fairbanks, Alaska, to the Caribbean.

Janene Gragg was one of many who attended the Blanket Exercise led by Vance Blackfox, describing it as "extremely powerful". This exercise is an interactive, participatory tool that teaches the history of colonization and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. **Rita Nelson** commended the Bible Study leaders and speakers as "outstanding". **Carol Bunge** was reminded that Rev. Sarah Olsen-Smith shared in plenary session: "we are all connected to the vine—one body, many parts—taking care of one another. We can't exist on our own, we need one another where all creatures can flourish". **Karen Foote** especially enjoyed time with those from her congregation and meeting other people. Each of the recipients extended sincere thanks for the scholarship and mentioned their plan to attend in 2029 in Louisville, KY.

As a Synodical Organization we are blest that those who have gone before us had the foresight to initiate this scholarship fund and those that, through the years, have nurtured its growth by participating in the silent auction at our conventions.

Submitted by Vickie Donnell, Treasurer

"…Love your neighbor as yourself." Mark 12:31

Mark your calendars for July 30 – August 1, 2027, for our 37th Central States Synodical Convention! The event will be held at the Double Tree Hotel in Lawrence, KS.

The board is busy planning an exciting convention. It will be a time that is energizing and at times moving.

Our theme ties with Memorial 7: Raise Awareness of Indian Boarding Schools and Memorial 8: Raise Awareness of Mission and Murdered Indigenous Women.

We are excited that Kennedy Murphy will be our keynote speaker. She is a citizen of the Apache Tribe of Oklahoma and the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma. She is a recent graduate of the master's program in Indigenous Studies at the University of Kansas. Kennedy is affiliated with the Watkins Museum of History at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. As the keynote speaker and breakout session leader, she will bring to the convention her extensive knowledge and research on Indigenous Women and the history of Boarding Schools.

Another breakout session leader will be Lisa Stewart, author of the book *The Big Quiet, One Woman's Horse-back Ride Home.* This book describes the author's 500-mile solo journey across Missouri on horseback. Themes of solitude, resilience and self-discovery will touch our convention participants.

That is just the beginning! We will have our ever-popular sing-along, plus so much more! Stay tuned for updates! We look forward to seeing you in July 2027.

Submitted by Karen MacDonald, Vice President

Churchwide News!

Women of the ELCA is doing great things supporting women and girls in their vocations as they serve the church and world!

Last year Churchwide held a S.A.L.T. (Share Abundance, Love and Thanks) appeal to help make up for deficits in 2024 and 2025 due to decreased contributions.

The campaign is back this year and we encourage all ladies of Central States Synod to STAY SALT-Y. Keep Sharing your Abundance Love and Thanks (SALT) as part of your offering to Women of the ELCA. These donations to Where Needed Most help support day-to-day operations (salaries, insurance, postage, resource development, technology, and programs). In addition, the offerings help support women of all ages as they create ministry resources and lead advocacy efforts for the church, society, and world. Every dollar of fall donations (up to $50,000) is matched by former board member Julia Hong Sabella. That means every dollar you give becomes two dollars! In addition, you might want to consider adding Women of the ELCA to your Estate Planning.

You might be asking why the campaign is needed? Many thought this was a one-time event. Per the Executive Director, Jennifer Hockenbery, the SALT campaign was very successful last year to help make sure that revenue was over expenses. Only the campaign was less than expected; so, expenses were covered, it did not make up for past deficit spending. Years of deficit spending in the restricted and designated funds (especially for past Triennial Conventions and Gatherings) means that the Women of the ELCA needs to repay our own funds to be fully financially stable again. The good news that Churchwide is doing well, but they are encouraging (along with your board) to Stay Salty, so to move us to full financial health while continuing our programs.

You can donate by credit card at https://community.elca.org/welca

You can send a check made out to Women of the ELCA with **WO26-SALT** in the memo to:

Women of the ELCA
ELCA GIFT PROCESSING CENTER
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

Or you can donate using a credit card by calling: **800-638-3522**. Operators are ready to assist you Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Central Time.



Ladies from Our Savior's, Jefferson City, MO



Attendees: Louise Ahrens, Rita Nelson, Pat Dunavan

LAY MINISTRY IS GROWING!



One of the first conversations I had with Bishop Donna after she invited me to serve on her staff was to learn about her vision for our tenure. She was very clear. She wanted to support and build up lay ministry and make that a priority. Unfortunately, about halfway through our first year, our Director of Lay Ministry, Rev. Adam Wutka, took a new call in a different synod. We tried hard not to let this transition set us back too far, and we have been working hard toward her goal of building up lay ministry across the synod ever since. God has been faithful and just started scattering and planting seeds all over the place.

We quickly got connected with Nebraska Synod to talk about jointly training our Parish Ministry Associates (PMAs) and what it might look like to work together. Luther Seminary has recently created an online lay school called Faith+Lead. We realized we could plug into this and use their resources to train our PMAs. But because Faith+Lead is 100% online, we wanted our PMA students to have some personal connection too. So, we decided to create cohorts of students – people you start the program with and connect with regularly, despite the fact you may be working through the training at your own pace. Our Spring 2026 cohort started with 7 students who were willing to be our guinea pigs for the new training program. And then this summer, we started hosting Discernment Events across the synod. There were 5 different weekend retreats designed to give people space and time to explore God's call on their lives. We talked, prayed, studied God's word, and listened to how God might be calling each person deeper into their faith. The retreats were life-giving & very fulfilling (at least for me personally), and God blessed us with about 60 participants. From those 60 people, we just had 16 new students start the PMA training program as the Fall 2026 Cohort. (And I know this article is about lay ministry, but we also ended up with 4 others considering rostered ministry and will soon go before our Candidacy Committee.) Once in the program, each of our PMAs and PMA students are assigned a rostered pastor as their mentor/supervisor. We've also started offering training and support for those mentors & supervisors, so that they can each be better support for our PMAs. It will be fun to see how all these little sprouts will grow, flourish and bear fruit in the coming years. We could have 20+ new PMAs within the next two years!

But Bishop Donna isn't finished! We recognize that some people might want to go deeper in their faith but not feel called to become a PMA. Some people just like learning, taking classes, and getting more than they can in a normal Sunday school class or well-preached sermon. So, we are working on creating a Lay School, which will offer in-person and/or live classes that people can take as they are available. We don't have details on this exciting opportunity yet, but there are conversations happening. There is lots to be excited about, and I can't wait to see what God might do next across our synod.

Submitted by Rev. Chad Langdon

Cluster Coordinators Updates

The Cluster Coordinators have completed their last Gatherings.
Central Kansas Cluster met on August 1st and 33 women attended.
Western Cluster met on August 29 with 36 people attending.
Border Cluster had a second Gathering on September 26 and 36 women attended.

Good job Coordinators. They are now busy counting how many active units are in each Cluster so we know how many voting members we will be able to send to the 2029 Triennial.

Submitted by Gaye Mizell, Board Member

LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Lutheran World Relief Ingatherings!
Exciting news!

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (Hazelwood, MO)
524 quilts, 237 personal care kits, 309 school kits, 5 baby care kits, 54 fabric kits
Donations of $1,612

Our Savior's Lutheran (Jefferson City)
12 churches/organizations
736 quilts, 470 personal care kits, 430 school kits 146 baby care kits, 13 fabric kits
Donations of $6,323

St. John's Lutheran (Salina, KS)
20 churches
1,357 quilts, 677 personal care kits, 1,011 school kits, 350 baby care kits 10 fabric kits

Christ Lutheran (Wichita, KS)
8 churches
406 quilts, 929 personal care kits, 440 school kits, 23 baby care kits, 5 fabric kits

Trinity Lutheran (Hays, KS)
12 churches
4,787 pounds of donations including quilts, personal care kits, school kits, baby care kits and sewing kits

St. John's Lutheran (Pittsburg, KS)
4 churches
281 quilts, 62 personal care kits and 123 school kits

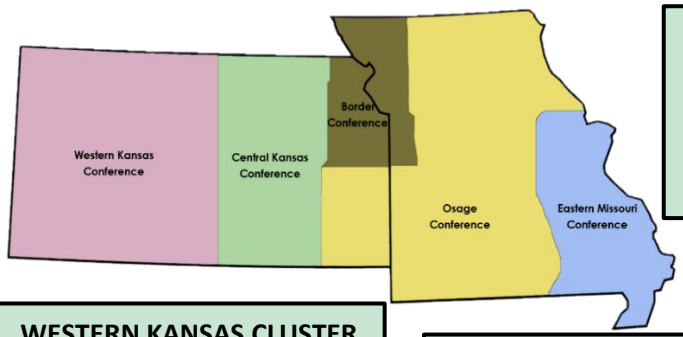
We don't know when disaster will strike, it could be here in the United States or across the world. This year, earthquakes devasted parts of Venezuela and Columbia. Severe floods and mudslides swept through Nepal. In the U. S., we had disasters in Washington, Texas and Hawaii. Disasters will certainly happen and our neighbors will need us. Women across the Central States Synod come to the aid of the victims throughout the world. Over the past year, they have met to make quilts and assemble personal care, baby care, school and fabric kits. All these items were forwarded to Lutheran World Relief. There were six ingatherings held across the synod.

If you are interested in knowing more about Lutheran World Relief and how to get involved, please see their website, www.lwr.org. Within our synod, you can reach out to Gloria Sharp (Jefferson City, MO), 573-462-9758 or Marty Ryan (Salina, KS), 785-342-1932.

We pray….

Good and gracious God,
for those who cut fabric, batting and tied knots,
for those who shopped and donated thousands of pieces,
for those who assembled the kits,
for those who boxed and labeled the quilts and kits,
for those who loaded and transported the boxes to the ingathering sites,
for those who assisted at the ingathering sites to load the trucks, and
for the hours of fellowship shared while quilting and assembling,
WE ARE THANKFUL!!!!
We ask that You go with these quilts and kits as they reflect the love and shine the light of Christ, offering hope where and when it is needed most. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you to our Cluster Coordinators



OSAGE CLUSTER COORDINATORS
Mick Friberg
Ileen Kendall
Becky Verslues

BORDER CLUSTER COORDINATORS
Carol Bunge
Pat Dunavan
Sarah Dunning

WESTERN KANSAS CLUSTER COORDINATORS
Kara Jecha
Cindy Steinert

CENTRAL KANSAS CLUSTER COORDINATORS
Tasha Hickert
Kathy Regehr

EASTERN MISSOURI CLUSTER COORDINATORS
Nancy Berry
Eunice Halverson
Julie Weber



The Central Kansas Cluster met on Saturday August 1st at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Kansas. A total of thirty-three ladies from ten different churches came together for a lovely day of fellowship, games, and a delicious lunch. The theme of the day was "Woven together in Christ." The guest speaker was Julie Carlson, of Grace Evangelical (Osage City) and Resurrection (Hayesville). Julie traveled with Pastors Janice Hawley, Jenny Jackson and Gary Teske to the Kotte District Papua New Guinea, our companion synod in November 2025. She shared her experiences of their trip. Thank you for all that attended!



The Western Kansas Cluster met on August 29th at Trinity Lutheran church in Hayes, Kansas. Thirty-six ladies from nine different congregations attended. The theme of the event was "I am Worthy". Ladies shared about their unit's activities. The guest speakers were Pastor Jenny Jackson and Julie Carlson. They shared their experiences of the trip to Papua New Guinea in November 2025. Following lunch, the ladies were given the opportunity to tour and shop at Jana's Closet, a ministry of Trinity. The shop provides used clothing to any women in need. An in-kind offering was collected.

The Border Cluster held their second event on September 26, with thirty-six ladies from four different congregations. Of the 36 ladies, there were three youths! The theme was "I am Worthy". Julie Carlson spoke about her trip to Papua New Guinea. There was a Bible Study led by Pastor Sami Pfalzgraf. We got on our feet doing an aerobic dance to "Mama Mia." A soup luncheon was enjoyed by all. Thank you so much to the Cluster Coordinators for planning this event!



More photos and reflections from the Triennial Gathering



"I am worthy" was 'front and center' throughout the 13th Triennial Gathering. This logo served to remind each woman present that we are strong women, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and called to serve in our churches, communities, and reaching out into the world.



The Triennial Gathering was held in the Iowa Event Center, Des Moines, IA, July 16-19, 2026. The Gathering does much to enrich our faith through Women of the ELCA engaging in prayer, Bible study, song, and fellowship.



Always a highlight of a Gathering is meeting new women from synods across the country, but, also, it is good to spend time with old friends. These ladies are from Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Jefferson City, MO (Osage Cluster). Pictured are Janene Gragg, Debbie Curtis, Karen Brockmeyer, Gloria Sharp, and Lynn Vallandingham.

There were ten breakout sessions held on Friday and Saturday, which covered a variety of topics: Supporting Youth, Mental Health, I am Worthy: Even the Ground Shakes, Transgender Experience; to name a few.

Vance Blackfox, an Indigenous theologian and citizen of the Cherokee Nation, presented a powerful experience the "Blanket Exercise" on Thursday morning. The "Blanket Exercise" led the participants through 500+ years of Indigenous history – their loss of their homeland by the influx of settlers, government relocations, and broken treaties and relationships. This experience provided participants with a greater understanding of the history of our Indigenous neighbors. An exciting event of the Gathering was the fire evacuation of all participants to the outside courtyard. Thankfully it was a false alarm!!



It was a delight to have the presiding bishop of the ELCA, Rev. Yehiel Curry, present at our closing worship on Sunday morning. The praise band provided an energizing experience for the women. They not only led the singing at worship, but also throughout our time together.

Submitted by Janice Gerken, Secretary





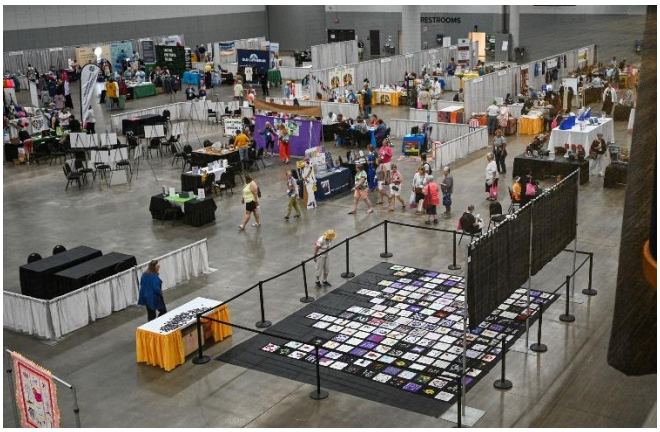
Carol Bunge &
Kris Langdon
Enjoying breakfast



Attendees from Region 4



Region 4 Presidents with Bishop Curry














WOMEN OF THE ELCA 5K
July 18, 2026



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Keep up to date with news from Central States Synodical Organization of Women of the ELCA

Subscriptions to this newsletter, *Walking in the Word,* are free of charge and available via USPS or e-mail. Please notify Joyce Uber at the contacts above.

Our Mission

Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Purpose

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

Reminder – to look at the Central State Synod Women of the ELCA Facebook page. Debbie Curtis is our administrator. You can see the latest pictures from the two recent Cluster events!

Interested in Board Minutes? They are posted on the Central States Synod website (css-elca.org/welca).