

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

**2025 CENTRAL STATES SYNOD ASSEMBLY ACTIONS**

<b>Number &amp; Name</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Actions needed/taken</b>
SA 25.01 Commitment to the Development of New Congregations	Establish a “New Mission Start Fund” seeded with money from the sale of synod owned property. Identify communities of growth and present a strategic plan with realistic goals for new starts over the next five years.	Task force was established. A full report follows below.
SA 25.02 A Season of Global Awareness	Epiphany season designated as Season of Global Awareness, October 5, 2025 – Sunday to remember ELCUSFE (Russia) and February 15, 2026 – Sunday to remember Papua New Guinea	The Companion Synod team provided a devotional series for the Epiphany season. Before designated Sundays, materials were made available for congregations to use during worship.
SA 25.03 Thanksgiving for Ministry	Remembered and gave thanks for: Retried Ministers Ministers who have died Congregations that closed Congregations that disaffiliated	The assembly joined together in prayer.

**SA 25.01 New Start Task Force Assembly Report**

In 2025 the Central States Assembly adopted SA 25.01 to commit \$100,000 of the Mission Transformation Fund to support starting new churches in the synod.

The second part of that resolution was a commitment to **Identify communities of growth in Kansas and Missouri** and **formulate a strategic mission plan** to be presented at the 2026 Synod Assembly of the Central States Synod. What follows is that report.

**1. Identify viable opportunities for the development of new ministries (top tier growth)**

- a. Wichita Metro Area
  - i. Maize, KS (Wichita)
- b. Kansas City Metro
  - i. Gardner, KS
  - ii. Spring Hill, KS
  - iii. Raymore, MO
  - iv. Parkville, KS
- c. St. Louis Metro
  - i. Moscow Mills, MO (Lincoln County)
  - ii. Wright City, MO (Warren County)

**2. Present a comprehensive list of resource requirements for new congregation development.**

The New Start Task Force is working to identify areas that offer potential for the development of a new congregation. Once an area has been selected, a Synod Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) Exploration process will take place to determine the vision and potential viability of a new start in the identified area.

The resources required for the SAWC Exploration which can be covered in large part by grants from Churchwide include; Exploration Leader Stipend, Programmatic Expenses (i.e. meals, coffee for one-to-ones), Travel Expenses, and Coaching for the Exploration Leader (\$100/month)

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

Should the exploration process lead to a decision to officially launch a new start, a variety of resources are needed to support both development and launch. In many new and growing communities, the reality is that time is among the most precious commodities, especially for those raising children. People seeking to connect with a congregation often gravitate toward churches that already have well-developed ministries in place, offering immediate opportunities for involvement.

For this reason, a new start benefits greatly from having a strong, visitor-expectant ministry for children and youth from the very beginning. Effective tools for marketing, outreach, and follow-up should also be ready on day one. Worship—likely offered in a modern or contemporary style—requires capable musicians as well as reliable audio-visual technology. These well-formed ministries and systems depend on appropriate staffing, a committed volunteer base, and key ministry partners working together to launch a vibrant and sustainable new congregation.

A rough estimate of what it will cost to fund this kind of new start ministry for the first three years (including Staffing, Marketing, Worship, and Administration) is \$388,000 (year 1), \$335,000 (year 2), and \$345,000 (year 3)

**3. Set forth a realistic goal for the number of new starts in the next five years.**

The New Start Task Force has concluded that with the funds available from the synod along with grant support from the churchwide expression, we have enough financial support to start one new ministry.

The task force recommends starting with Maize, KS, for the following reasons: additional funds have been specifically designated by Peace, Newton, KS, upon their closing, for a Maize new start. Also, contextual research in the area has already been completed and partners have been identified because of a previous new start exploration that was cut short due to leadership transitions.

At the same time, we encourage as many Explorations to begin in the other Tier 1 areas as we have individuals to lead them. Exploration leaders can be lay or ordained individuals who have gifts for connecting with new communities and listening to their needs. Exploration leaders will be trained by the DEM and supported through cohort coaching.

**4. Outline potential new missional opportunities and collaborative partnerships among established congregations in identified areas that will strengthen congregational mission and outreach.**

The key to a new start initiative in our synod is raising up those (lay and ordained) leaders, connectors, and storytellers from within our communities. Therefore, we are asking individuals, congregations, and conferences to identify people in their congregations who are gifted in community listening and faith sharing who might be interested in “tending the soil” of a new ministry start. In addition, we invite individuals, congregations, and conferences to consider contributing to the New Start Fund as they consider their legacy plans.

As we seek to develop a culture of witness and evangelism in the synod, we will continue to share updates at each Synod Assembly.

## **REPORT OF THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE**

### **Consideration of Resolutions**

Resolutions are formal, written main motions used to make a statement, authorize action, or express an opinion formally. To assist the Synod Assembly in its task of responding to these proposals, the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions* of the Central States Synod defines a Resolutions Committee with responsibility to review all resolutions and propose recommendations for assembly action.

The specific functions of the Committee are to:

- 1) ensure that resolutions submitted for consideration to the Synod Assembly are in the proper form;
- 2) eliminate duplication when similar resolutions are offered;
- 3) present resolutions in a logical sequence to allow adequate consideration of each; and,
- 4) except as the rules may provide otherwise, report all resolutions referred to the Committee with a recommendation.

For every properly received resolution, the Committee may recommend that the 2026 Synod Assembly:

- vote separately on the proposed responses to certain resolutions, and
- vote on the recommended responses to the remaining resolutions as a group (*en bloc*).

Meeting in April 2026, the Resolutions Committee reviewed the five resolutions received from synod committees, synod teams, and individual voting members of congregations of this Synod. The committee has grouped those resolutions that address the same topic or related concerns in order to facilitate the assembly's consideration.

The Committee recommends that the Synod Assembly consider separately the following four responses to the five resolutions properly received for 2026:

**SA26.A:** Celebrate Global and Companion Synod Ministry

**SA26.B:** Act for Climate Justice

**SA26.C:** Affirm People of God of All Gender Identities

**SA26.D:** Give Thanks for Concluded Stages of Ministry

In each part of this Report of the Resolutions Committee you will find two components:

- **Resolutions received**  
The resolutions are reproduced here in the form in which they were submitted, with edits for consistent formatting. The preamble (the "WHEREAS" clauses) provides information to assist readers in understanding context for discussion of the resolution. Attention should be focused, however, on the resolutions (the "RESOLVED" clauses), which make the actual request for action by the Synod Assembly. The resolved clauses are what inform the proposed action the assembly will vote on.
- **Recommendation of the Resolutions Committee for action by the Synod Assembly**  
In each section, the committee's recommendation for assembly action is printed in boldface type. In certain instances, the proposed action may be to affirm or to decline to recommend the proposed action. In other instances, the committee may recommend referral to the Synod Council or to a synod office or unit.

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

**Recommendation SA26.A: CELEBRATE GLOBAL AND COMPANION SYNOD MINISTRIES**

**1. Central States Synod Companion Synod Team**

***A Season of Global Awareness: Remembering our Companion Synods and ELCA Ministries around the World***

WHEREAS, the Central States Synod’s mission statement calls us into an “an active way of living and moving into and through this world” and invites us “deeper into a love of God and love of neighbor” that is not limited by boundaries but rather places us within a world-wide community of faith; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Time after Epiphany in 2027 be designated as a **Season of Global Awareness** for congregations within the Central States Synod and that congregations intentionally lift up in prayer and celebrate the church around the world through song, educational events, and in any way appropriate to the context of the congregation. The focus would be not only on our companion synods in Papua New Guinea and Russia, but also the global ministry we share in through the Service and Justice area of the ELCA such as missionary sponsorship, Young Adults in Global Mission, and our support of projects that promote the witness of the Gospel, works of compassion, and justice ministry around the world.

RESOLVED, that **Sunday, October 4th, 2026**, shall be designated as the Sunday to remember and celebrate our companion church relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia, and Far East (ELCUSFE), with a special focus on the Far Eastern Deanery. *(This date was chosen because the first Sunday in October is widely observed by the churches in Russia as a harvest Sunday when they give thanks and celebrate the completion of the fall harvest.)*

RESOLVED, that **Sunday, February 7th, 2027**, be designated as the Sunday to remember and celebrate our companion church relationship with the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG). This would be an appropriate way to conclude the Time after Epiphany, which is our Season of Global Awareness.

The Companion Synod Team of the Central States Synod – ELCA

Andrew Beers  
Joyce Benedict  
Jon Brudvig  
Jim Cooper

Matthew Helfrich  
Keith Holste  
Penny Holste  
Gary Kallansrud

Janice Kibler  
Daniel Lilienkamp  
Doug Reed  
Gary Teske

***Recommended for assembly action:***

- A1. To receive with gratitude the resolution from the Companion Synod Team**
- A2. To publicly affirm the relationship of the Central States Synod with its companion synods by designating the described Season of Global Awareness**
- A3. To direct the Companion Synod Team to provide resources for mission education and worship for the Time after Epiphany and to relay prayer requests, recent news, and communications from our companion synods prior to the two Companion Synod Sundays to help us accompany one another in our journey as followers, servants, and witnesses to Jesus Christ in our respective parts of God’s world**
- A4. To request synod communication promotes congregational participation in the Season of Global Awareness and observation of the two Companion Synod Sundays**

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

**Recommendation SA26.B: ACT FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE**

1. Lutherans Restoring Creation
2. St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Columbia, Missouri
3. Peace Lutheran Church, Joplin, Missouri
4. First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas

***World Council of Churches Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action***

WHEREAS, God created heaven and earth, and everything therein, and proclaimed it good (Gen 1:1ff); and God has entrusted humankind with the care of the earth (Gen 2:15); and

WHEREAS, in 1993, our ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation*, expressed concern about “climate change;” acknowledged that, “according to the preponderance of evidence from scientists worldwide” we face “dangerous global warming, caused by the buildup of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide;” and emphasized that “action to counter degradation, especially within this decade, is essential to the future of our children and our children’s children. Time is very short;”<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS, in 2022 the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted 672-45, “to receive with gratitude the memorials from 16 synods<sup>2</sup> concerning greenhouse gas emissions;” “to reaffirm the commitment of this church to engage in creation care and advocacy . . . ;” and “to encourage congregants, rostered ministers, and bishops to commit themselves to education about the urgency of the climate emergency . . . ;”<sup>3</sup> and

WHEREAS, on Earth Day 2023, the ELCA Church Council unanimously adopted a social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, stating that, “[f]rom a standpoint of faith, it is reasonable to conclude that the climate crisis is, indeed, a *kairos* moment”<sup>4</sup> and challenged all expressions of the ELCA to “[j]oin with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;”<sup>5</sup> and

WHEREAS, ELCA social teachings have emphasized the ethical priority for the most vulnerable and marginalized, who have contributed least to the climate crisis and bear a disproportionate weight of its effects; and the ELCA calls on organizations to support strategies that enable adaptation to climate change, including protecting the land rights of Indigenous peoples, in whose care land, resources, and biodiversity are more likely to be protected; and

WHEREAS, ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, in his 2025 “Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords,” affirmed the 2015 United Nations agreement that committed all nations, including the U.S., to limit global warming to well below 2° Celsius (C) while also pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5° C,<sup>6</sup> and emphasized:

It is not too late to protect our climate. With God, it is never too late. *Kairos* means that this is an opportune and urgent time to address Earth’s climate crisis. I am calling this church to be more connected and sustainable. This includes stewarding God’s creation as an expression of faith and seeking sustainability rooted in ways of living that honor everything God has called ‘good,’ including learning from and following the leadership of Indigenous communities. I commend to you the social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*;<sup>7</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> ELCA Social Statement, [Caring for Creation, Vision, Hope, and Justice](#) (1993), 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Oregon Synod, Southwest California Synod, Northeastern Minnesota Synod, Minneapolis Synod, Saint Paul Area Synod, Central States Synod, Southwestern Texas Synod, Northern Illinois Synod, Northeastern Iowa Synod, East-Central Synod of Wisconsin, Greater Milwaukee Synod, North/West Lower Michigan Synod, New England Synod, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, and Delaware-Maryland Synod.

<sup>3</sup> ELCA, [Report of the Memorials Committee, 2022 Churchwide Assembly](#) (July 15, 2022), 13-28.

<sup>4</sup> ELCA Social Message, [Earth’s Climate Crisis](#) (approved on Earth Day, April 20, 2023), 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Climate Change, [The Paris Agreement](#) (accessed 20 December 2025).

<sup>7</sup> ELCA, [A Message on the Tenth Anniversary of the Paris Climate Accords](#) (December 9, 2025).

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

WHEREAS, on June 21, 2025, the World Council of Churches (WCC) began an Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, which is “a prophetic pilgrimage of repentance, transformation, and hope” that calls “churches to ecological *metanoia* and systemic change rooted in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation;”<sup>8</sup> and

WHEREAS, in Belem, Brazil, WCC Vice President Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith introduced the Decade of Climate Justice Action to faith groups attending the 30th U.N. Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, stating that “We (WCC) have had Decades in solidarity with women, against violence, against racism, and now we say climate justice brings all of those together.”<sup>9</sup> and

WHEREAS, the ELCA is a leader in resourcing churchwide staff positions dedicated to programming for racial justice and gender justice; and the ELCA seeks to lead comparably in the work of climate justice, especially in light of its 2023 Social Message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, which calls us to see the climate crisis as a *kairos* moment, a moment when we recognize “*God’s urgent call for decisive action in history*”; and the ELCA’s leadership in the call to decisive action will require bold resourcing of additional churchwide staff member(s) solely dedicated to climate justice”<sup>10</sup>; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table; St. Andrew Lutheran Church of Columbia, Missouri; Peace Lutheran Church of Joplin, Missouri; and, First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas, urge every congregation, synod, ELCA-related educational institution, affiliated ministry, separately incorporated ministry, individual member, and the churchwide office of the ELCA to commit to active participation in the WCC’s Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action, since the ELCA is a member communion of the World Council of Churches;<sup>11</sup> and be it further

RESOLVED, the various expressions of the ELCA in our synod be guided over the next decade by “the convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate *kairos*” adopted in the ELCA’s 2023 social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*,<sup>12</sup> which include the following:

- “Reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the rate scientists project will keep global warming below 2.0 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius;
  - Support an interim U.S. target of 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from 2005 levels by 2030;
- “Support mitigation strategies to achieve these goals;
- “Promote scientific literacy and instruction about global warming and climate change in all our educational institutions;
- “Engage in legislative advocacy at all levels of government, individually and collectively;
- “Join with ecumenical, interfaith, and secular partners working to address the climate crisis;” and be it further

RESOLVED, the congregations in our synod be guided over the next decade by “the convictions to guide discernment and actions toward the challenges posed by the climate *kairos*” adopted in the ELCA’s 2023 social message, *Earth’s Climate Crisis*,<sup>13</sup> which include the following:

- “Promote creation care through preaching, worship, and educational programming;
- “Consider adopting congregational commitments to creation care, for example, by becoming a Creation Care Covenant Congregation via Lutherans Restoring Creation;
- “Provide pastoral care to those struggling with “climate anxiety” and other related mental health concerns, especially our youngest people;
- “Witness publicly to the climate crisis and ‘walk the talk’ by:

<sup>8</sup> World Council of Churches, “[Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action: Moving Together in Ecological Metanoia for Transformation.](#)”

<sup>9</sup> World Council of Churches, “[Tapiri closing service brings climate justice decade to COP30](#)” (November 18, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> The ELCA has a full-time Director for Racial Justice (Jennifer DeLeon) and a full-time Director for Gender Justice and Women’s Empowerment (Mary Streufert).

<sup>11</sup> World Council of Churches, “[Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action: Moving Together in Ecological Metanoia for Transformation.](#)”

<sup>12</sup> *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, 13-17.

<sup>13</sup> *Earth’s Climate Crisis*, 13-17.

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

- Achieving the same levels of greenhouse gas reduction that the ELCA urges the U.S. government to pursue
  - Investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy systems
  - Reviewing how ELCA landholdings can be used to sequester carbon, promote biodiversity, and/or encourage other life-giving relationships with creation
  - Becoming ‘anticipatory communities’ that model climate resiliency (e.g., emergency shelters, cooling spaces, community gardens);
- “Engage in acts of community organizing to build stronger relationships and more resilient communities that can take action to create meaningful climate solutions and help people understand that they have the power to make lasting change;” and be it further

RESOLVED, that the CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table; St. Andrew Lutheran Church of Columbia, Missouri; Peace Lutheran Church of Joplin, Missouri; and, First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas, urge the ELCA Churchwide Organization to devote additional funds and staffing to lead us in this *kairos* moment when decisive action is required, and to help all expressions of the ELCA participate actively in the WCC’s Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action; and be it further

RESOLVED, the ELCA shall launch a fund-raising campaign “Climate Justice Action for the Life of the World,” (in concert with the appropriate ELCA churchwide offices), as a means to strengthen awareness, commitment, and advocacy across all congregations, synods, and ELCA churchwide; and to raise at least \$1 million for concrete programs dedicated to greenhouse gas reduction and other efforts to address Earth’s climate crisis in response to *God’s urgent call for decisive action* in this *kairos* moment; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod Assembly instructs the Central States Synod Council to request that the ELCA Church Council and Conference of Bishops implement the previous Resolveds.

Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table of the Central States Synod

St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Columbia, Missouri

Peace Lutheran Church, Joplin, Missouri

First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, Kansas

Additional Endorsements:

Noni Strand, Atonement, Overland Park; Cindy Gross, Bethel, St. Louis; Sheryl Mehrhoff, St. Andrew’s, Columbia; Gary and Jeani Anderson, First, Topeka; Keith Mundy, Atonement, Overland Park; Larry Erickson, First, Manhattan; Janice Hawley, Good Shepherd, Lawrence; Jane Meyerkord, Atonement, Florissant; Christyn Koschmann, Martin Luther, Lee’s Summit.

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

**5. Ryan Bose, American Lutheran Church, Smith Center, Kansas,  
in collaboration with Ecojustice classmates at Wartburg Seminary and their professor, Rev. Craig Nessian**

***Resolution on Solar Energy***

WHEREAS, the Triune God has created the Sun as the source of all solar, wind, and fossil fuel energy to provide for our needs<sup>14</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the Creator's wisdom calls us to serve, keep, and love the earth, sky, waters, and all their creatures<sup>15</sup>; and

WHEREAS, God justifies us by grace in Jesus Christ and frees us to do justice by advocating for social structures that protect creation<sup>16</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the global climate crisis is a *kairos* moment for repentance and change<sup>17</sup>; and

WHEREAS, caring for the environment is an expression of our love for God's creation and our shared responsibility to be faithful stewards of God's earth; and

WHEREAS, God's Spirit calls us not only to avoid harming creation but to active works of justice for the flourishing of all creation; and

WHEREAS, the use of fossil fuels as a source of energy injures human health and leads to economic instabilities, exploitation, social injustice, and climate change, causing disproportionate and inequitable impacts on a worldwide scale; and

WHEREAS, the use of fossil fuels as a source of energy damages water, air, and land, and harmfully impacts all forms of life on earth, especially the most vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, the current energy policy of the US does not address climate change and energy independence has become a worldwide peacemaking need; and

WHEREAS, current technology provides the ability for independence from fossil fuels for the energy needs of most buildings through solar and battery technology; and

WHEREAS, some states provide tax incentives for solar energy that reduce carbon emissions and provide a more stable source of energy in times of natural and human made disasters; and

WHEREAS, using solar power to generate electricity can provide long term financial savings, also for future generations, and the money saved could be used for the church's mission; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod encourage congregations to install solar panels both for energy savings and as a witness to their communities about loving creation as our neighbor; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod encourage congregations to install EV charging stations in their parking areas to encourage people toward energy efficiency in transportation and as a witness to their communities about caring for creation; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod draw upon the expertise of congregational members to facilitate these efforts; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod establish and maintain a Renewable Energy Task Force to guide, support, organize, and create resources to support congregations in these initiatives; and be it further

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<sup>14</sup> Bill McKibben, *Here Comes the Sun: A Last Chance for the Climate and a Fresh Chance for Civilization*

<sup>15</sup> ELCA Social Statement, *Caring for Creation, Vision, Hope, and Justice* (1993).

<sup>16</sup> ELCA Social Statement, *The Church in Society* (1991), 7.

<sup>17</sup> ELCA Social Message, *Earth's Climate Crisis* (approved on Earth Day, April 20, 2023), 7.

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod memorialize the ELCA Churchwide Organization to encourage synods, seminaries, and congregations to install solar panels both for energy savings and as a witness to their communities about loving God's people and creation as our neighbor.

Ryan Bose and Craig Nesson on behalf of the Wartburg Theological Seminary Ecojustice students

***Recommended for assembly action:***

- B1. To receive with gratitude the resolutions from Lutherans Restoring Creation and from Ryan Bose in collaboration with his classmates and professor, Craig Nesson.**
- B2. To request congregations and affiliated ministries of the Central States Synod to commit to active participation in the WCC's Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action**
- B3. To request the various expressions of the ELCA within the Central States Synod be guided over the next decade by the convictions adopted in the ELCA's 2023 social message, *Earth's Climate Crisis***
- B4. To encourage congregations of the Central States Synod to install solar panels and/or EV charging stations as primary ways of witnessing to their communities and exhibiting their active participation in the Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice**
- B5. To direct the Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table of the Central States Synod to explore and identify any additional resources they might need to guide, support, and organize congregations in their renewable energy initiatives and to report any related requests to the Synod Council by March, 2027**
- B6. To encourage congregation members with related expertise to participate in the work of the Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table of the Central States Synod**
- B7. To direct the Central States Synod Council to request that the ELCA Church Council implement the Churchwide budgetary, staffing, and fund-raising goals identified in the Lutherans Restoring Creation resolution and the solar panel encouragement of the Ryan Bose, Craig Nesson, and Wartburg Seminary Ecojustice Students resolution**

## **Recommendation SA26.C: AFFIRM PEOPLE OF GOD OF ALL GENDER IDENTITIES**

### **1. Hearts Across the Heartland**

#### ***Affirming Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender Expansive, Two-Spirit, and Genderqueer People of God***

WHEREAS, the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that “God created humans in [God’s] image” and “God saw everything that [God] had made, and indeed, it was very good,”<sup>18</sup> and

WHEREAS, in Jesus Christ, we know that “God loves human life so much that ‘the Word became Flesh’ (John 1:14), and we know, therefore, that God’s love embraces us totally, including our sexuality”<sup>19</sup> and gender identity, and

WHEREAS, in *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* we read: “this church must work toward greater understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity. It must seek that which is positive and life-giving while protecting from all that is harmful and destructive,” and “this church also will attend to the need for equal protection, equal opportunities, and equal responsibilities under the law, and just treatment for those with varied sexual orientation and gender identity. Such individuals are disproportionately and negatively affected by patterns of stigma, discrimination, and abuse. Likewise, it will attend to the particular needs of children and the families of those with actual or perceived differences in sexual orientation or gender identity because they are especially vulnerable to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, and sexual abuse,”<sup>20</sup> and

WHEREAS, in *A Social Message on Gender-based Violence*, the ELCA stated that “Gender-based violence is sin. While it takes many forms, in all its variations gender-based violence attacks, violates and often destroys the good that God brings to life,”<sup>21</sup> and

WHEREAS, *A Social Message on Human Rights* declares, “The ELCA will support domestic and international human rights institutions, foster deliberation, and engage in sustained action that seek rights for any neighbors – especially the vulnerable – who are not being treated with the dignity that is God’s gift,”<sup>22</sup> and

WHEREAS, the Central States Synod, along with twenty-eight other synods and 1,093 congregations across the ELCA, is a Reconciling in Christ partner with ReconcilingWorks: Lutherans for Full Participation, which has

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 1:27 and 31 NRSVue.

<sup>19</sup> *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust* (adopted by ELCA Churchwide Assembly on August 19, 2009), 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Gift and Trust*, 23-24 and 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> *A Social Message on Gender-based Violence* (adopted by the ELCA Church Council on November 14, 2015), 6.

<sup>22</sup> *A Social Message on Human Rights* (adopted by the ELCA Church Council on November 12, 2017), 14.

## Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly

### Section V - Resolutions

advocated for the full welcome of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA2S+<sup>23</sup>) Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church, congregations, and community<sup>24</sup>, and

WHEREAS, the current executive branch of the federal government has targeted transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people with multiple executive orders and policies<sup>25</sup>, and these executive orders and policies are harming the rights and lives of transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer people, especially children and youth, with regards to healthcare, mental health, employment, sports participation, social services, housing, and more<sup>26</sup>, and

WHEREAS, the state governments of Kansas and Missouri have likewise enacted legislation that has targeted transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people<sup>27</sup> and is harming the rights and lives of these beloved children of God, especially with regards to the right to access healthcare, sports participation, government-issued identification, public facilities, and more; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod publicly affirms the divinely-created goodness and beauty in all transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people of all ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, religions, and beliefs; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod speak out against the harmful policies and language towards transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people perpetrated by government leaders and agencies wherever it is encountered; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod, in partnership with long-time advocacy and education organizations ReconcilingWorks, Kansas Interfaith Action, and PROMO Missouri, along with ecumenical and community partners,

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<sup>23</sup> **LGBTQIA2S+** stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Two-Spirit. The terms used to describe gender identities and sexual orientations are constantly changing and being updated to better represent people. Where there are standing definitions, individuals interpret these definitions within their own lived experiences. **Sexual Orientation & Gender Orientation:** Sexual orientation or sexuality is an aspect of self that involves how you identify, the way you experience sexual or romantic desire (if you do), the gender(s) or sex(es) of the people you engage in sexual or romantic activity with (if any), the gender(s) or sex(es) of the people you are attracted to (if any). Sexuality can change over the course of someone's life and in different situations. It's understood to be a spectrum instead of a series of mutually exclusive categories. **Gender orientation** is how you define yourself in relation to your own gender. This can coincide with the sex you were assigned at birth or not. You can identify within the gender binary of either man or woman, outside, or in between. It's understood to be a spectrum instead of a series of mutually exclusive categories. **Transgender** is a gender identity that does not correspond with the gender assigned at birth. **Cisgender** is a gender identity that does correspond with the gender assigned at birth. **Intersex** means you're born with biological traits that are outside the strict male/female gender binary (such as anatomy, chromosomes, and/or hormones). Examples include Turners Syndrome, Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, and Klinefelters Syndrome. Being intersex is not the same thing as being transgender. **Non-binary** typically is descriptive of someone whose gender identity is not exclusively male or female but whose identity falls in-between, outside of or independent of traditional gender identities. **Genderqueer** typically is outside of, in-between, or fluctuating between the binary gender categories of male and female. Genderqueer relates to the spectrum of both **Gender Identity** as well as **Gender Expression**, that is, they may move fluidly between the identities of male and female and separately may move fluidly between masculine expression and feminine expression. **Two-Spirit** refers to Indigenous people who express their gender or sexual identities as different from others. Not all Indigenous individuals who are not Cisgender or Heterosexual will identify as Two-Spirited, but all Two-spirit individuals identify as Indigenous. Some nations hold space for more than two genders, such as the Dine, the Anishnaabe, and the Lakota.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.reconcilingworks.org/>; [2024 Synod Assembly Minutes.pdf](#), 9-11.

<sup>25</sup> "Defending Women from Gender Ideology and Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," Presidential Executive Order, January 20 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>;

"Keeping Men Out of Womens' Sports," Presidential Executive Order, February 5 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/keeping-men-out-of-womens-sports/>;

"Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness," Presidential Executive Order, January 27 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/prioritizing-military-excellence-and-readiness/>;

"Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation," Presidential Executive Order, January 28 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-children-from-chemical-and-surgical-mutilation/>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.hrc.org/news/understanding-executive-orders-and-what-they-mean-for-the-lgbtq-community>;  
<https://19thnews.org/2025/03/trump-anti-trans-executive-orders/>.

<sup>27</sup> Promo Equality in Missouri [The Advocacy Insider - PROMO](#) and Kansas Interfaith Action [KIFA Latest — Kansas Interfaith Action](#).

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

equip congregations, ministries, and rostered and lay leaders with information and theological background in order to empower us to public witness, as specified in the Strategy Towards Authentic Diversity<sup>28</sup>; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Central States Synod continually seek guidance from transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit and genderqueer leaders both inside the Church (ReconcilingWorks, seminary scholars and students, synod staff, Conference of Bishops, rostered leaders, lay leaders) and outside the Church for how to best advocate on their behalf in this time.

Hearts across the Heartland

The Reverend Meagan McLaughlin (she/her)

The Reverend David Frerichs (he/him)

The Reverend Micah Sievenpiper (he/him)

***Recommended for assembly action:***

- C1. To receive with gratitude the resolution from Hearts across the Heartland**
- C2. To publicly affirm the divinely-created goodness and beauty in all transgender, nonbinary, gender expansive, two-spirit, and genderqueer people of all ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, religions, and beliefs**
- C3. To direct the Synod Council, in consultation with Hearts across the Heartland, to identify and allocate resources that will enable strengthening partnerships with ReconcilingWorks, Kansas Interfaith Action, and PROMO Missouri with goals toward training and equipping the synod for public witness concerning diversity**
- C4. To request congregations and congregation members of the Central States Synod speak out against policies and language harmful to people of the LGBTQIA2S+ community wherever encountered**
- C5. To request synod committees, teams, tables, and other units to seek input and guidance from LGBTQIA2S+ leaders when developing policy, advocacy plans, or other proposals for action within the synod.**

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<sup>28</sup> "Synods will assist congregations in participating in training on transforming white privilege, internalized racial oppression, and cultural humility. This training needs to happen intersectionally to include gender, sexuality, and class, ability, documented status, etc. in a way that is holistic, comprehensive and mutual," *How Strategic And Authentic Is Our Diversity: A Call for Confession, Reflection, and Healing Action* (adopted by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly on August 9, 2019), 11.

**Central States Synod 2026 Synod Assembly**  
Section V - Resolutions

**Recommendation SA26.D: GIVE THANKS FOR CONCLUDED STAGES OF MINISTRY**

**1. Central States Synod Resolutions Committee**

***Thanksgiving for Ministry***

Baptized, we welcome one another as fellow members of the Body of Christ and workers with us in the reign of God. Our merciful God gives us particular companions to know and to love in our pilgrimage here on earth. Since the last assembly, the following rostered ministers, whom we remember with thanksgiving and reverence, have died:

The Rev. Vance Eckstrom of Lindsborg, KS (June 8, 2025)  
The Rev. Sharon Bockelman of Lone Jack, MO (August 3, 2025)  
The Rev. Gerhard Kraus of Fenton, MO (September 3, 2025)  
The Rev. Timothy (Tim) Leaf of McPherson, KS (January 3, 2026)  
Deacon Carolyn Wilson of Overland Park, KS (February 18, 2026)  
Deacon Edgar (Ed) Kruse of La Crescent, MN (April 13, 2026)

The following persons have served the Church faithfully, using their gifts and abilities to build up the Body of Christ, and have now retired from active ministry on the roster of the Church since the last Central States Synod Assembly:

The Rev. Jonathan (Jon) Anderson, from Prairie Faith Shared Ministry Parish (July 1, 2025)  
The Rev. Winston Persaud, from Wartburg Seminary (July 1, 2025)  
The Rev. Susan Candea, from Bishop, Central States Synod (September 1, 2025)  
The Rev. David (Dave) Whetter, from Bishop's Associate, Central States Synod (September 1, 2025)  
The Rev. Bradford (Brad) Bray, from disability status (January 1, 2026)

The body of Christ gathers as congregations to proclaim the gospel, share the means of grace, and empowered to carry out God's mission in the world. The following congregation(s) withdrew from the ELCA, discerning that they were called to participate in God's mission through other denominations:

Hope Lutheran Church, Rolla, MO (2nd vote to withdraw on October 5, 2025)  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lucas, KS (2nd vote to withdraw on December 21, 2025)

THEREFORE, be it resolved that this Assembly recognizes and gives thanks for the ministry of these ministers and these congregations.

***Recommended for assembly action:***

**D1. To receive with gratitude and approve the resolution from the Central States Synod Resolutions Committee**