

Summer 2026



The excitement is building! We have been anticipating the Triennial Gathering for the past two and half years. We will gather to worship, sing and learn! We will gather to get to know each other better. Please see page 2-3 for Cyndy Dixon's quilt. If you are going to the Gathering, please stop by to see the quilt and vote for the People's Choice Award. It is an exciting time, and I am looking forward to seeing so many in Des Moines.

Cluster meetings are going strong! Eastern, Border and Osage have had successful events. Thank you to all the coordinators who worked to make these events successful. It was so much fun to meet new friends and catch-up with "old" ones. Mark your calendars for the Central Kansas Cluster meeting, on August 1st at Emanuel Lutheran in Hutchinson and Western Kansas Cluster meeting on August 29th at Trinity, Hays.

The Lynn Starr Scholarships recipients are in this issue! Congratulations to the five young ladies! We look forward to hearing about their journeys.

At our last board meeting we selected the theme for the 2027 convention, "**Love Your Neighbor as Yourself**" based upon **Mark 12:31**. You have a year to ponder who is your neighbor? Is it the person down the street? At church? At the doctor's office? Across the country? Across the world? We all have times in our lives when we meet someone by chance who changes our lives forever. We have that opportunity to meet new people across our synod, welcoming each one to be our neighbor. We have that opportunity to meet our sisters in Christ from Papua New Guinea. Please see the article for more details!

Looking forward to seeing you at our opportunities to gather!

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, President

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2027 CONVENTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Join us for a gathering of Lutheran women in Lawrence Kansas, June 25-27, 2027. Come worship, advocate and be inspired. Our theme of "**Love Your Neighbor as Yourself**" (Mark 12:31) will lead us through the weekend as we experience an interconnectedness in which we will journey into strengthening our sisterhood created in the image of God.

Worship, music, activities and inspirational speakers will focus on our theme, while we connect with others as one body with Christ. As we get closer to the date, more valuable information will come.

Submitted by Karen MacDonald, Vice-President

Quilt Gathering



As part of the Triennial Gathering, participants were invited to design and create a quilt interpreting the theme “I am worthy.” From entries submitted nationwide, only 20 quilts would be chosen for display at the Triennial. At first, I did not plan to enter. I felt I did not have enough time, and I honestly did not have any ideas.

A couple of nights later, I woke up in the middle of the night and could not fall back asleep. Ideas for a quilt kept bouncing around in my head. I finally got up to make a cup of tea and decided I could at least try to sketch the ideas that were floating around. Within a few minutes, I had a rough draft—and a quilt to begin creating. The quilt is made with raw-edge appliqué, which means each piece of fabric is cut, fused onto the block, and then machine stitched with clear thread. In some places, I used gold metallic thread to highlight certain pieces. The circles around the addition block include hand-drawn symbols of various addictions, created with fabric paint pens.

I began with a large center block of the logo for the gathering.

I then put smaller blocks on each corner depicting the things that make us feel unworthy;

- Societal Pressures
- Broken Relationships
- Addictions
- Self-Doubt

The rectangles bordering the center block have conversation bubbles with examples of negative self-talk. The words in the conversation bubbles were colored first with a black artist pencil then colored over to give the words depth. The conversation bubbles with words were machine stitched using a dark grey thread. There are empty bubbles quilted in to mentally add your own negative self-talk.

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Outside larger corner blocks are the things that overcome our feelings of unworthiness;

The Word that teaches us we are worthy

The Holy Spirit that leads us to live worthy lives

Communion that feeds us

The Church that helps us grow our faith.

Outside rectangles have positive self-talk conversation bubbles and more quilted empty bubbles to mentally add your own positive self-talk.

The colorful people are the community of faith that surrounds us, builds us up and supports us in prayer and praise.



Cyndy Dixon

The blocks in the center and outside are larger than the inside blocks because our faith is greater than the self-talk and other things that make us feel unworthy.

Quilt Name: Healing Faith

Quilt designed, created and quilted by Cyndy Dixon

I truly believe God woke me up that night and filled me with His creativity. I am honored and humbled that my quilt was chosen as one of the 20 to be displayed at the Triennial Gathering. Entries will be judged by a panel of selected quilters, and final winners will be selected based on originality, adherence to the theme, workwomanship, creative use of materials, and overall design execution. There will also be a People's Choice Award and a Quilters' Choice Award. Winners and qualifying entries will be on display at the 2026 Gathering in Des Moines, Iowa. They will be auctioned at the Gathering, with 50% of the proceeds going to Women of the ELCA and 50% going to Lutheran World Relief.

Making this quilt helped me work through some of the things that had made me feel unworthy. I laughed and cried as I created it. My hope is that this quilt touches others as deeply as creating it has touched me.

Submitted by Cyndy Dixon



Author in our Midst

We, in the Central States Synod, are blessed to have an author in our midst. Pastor Kim Knowle-Zeller recently published her second book, "Small Steps". This book is a collection of "Blessings to lift your Soul on the Pilgrimage of Life". "The Beauty of Motherhood" was her first book – co-authored with Erin Strybis and published in 2023.

Kim's writings have appeared in the *Living Lutheran*, *Gather*, *Christ in our Home*, and other publications. You may purchase your copy through Amazon.

Kim lives in Cole Camp, MO with husband Stephen (Pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran) and their children, Charlotte and Isaac.

If there are other authors in our synod, please contact a board member; and we can include an article in the *Walking in the Word* highlighting your publication.

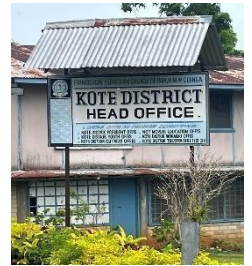
Submitted by Janice Gerken, Secretary

Following up on the May article written by President Louise, I offer some following thoughts to help us recognize the work we can do in walking more closely with Jesus. It sets the table to prepare the way to love our neighbors, especially as Pastor Gary Teske calls our Companion Synods – “Companion Cousins in Christ”!

Have you found yourself hurrying to catch up with Jesus, who is leading ahead? And we follow! As the Companion Visiting Team arrived in Papua New Guinea, we were welcomed at the airport by a few people and then on the next day, a group of ELC-PNG Women from their WELCA-type Group (called the Yawng Ngok) warmly welcomed us, presenting flavorful fruit for lunch, bright colorful meri dresses, shell necklaces, and bilum bags.



But that was not all – they sang and danced to truly let us know that God had been preparing them for our arrival! They were so overjoyed as we all hugged to know we made the trip all the way from Kansas and Missouri, USA to their Koté District - PNG! It was very clear: they, too, had been working to get ready for our arrival and blessed us beyond belief! Their preparations and beautiful hand-made gifts encouraged our relationships, and I felt so humbled and honored at the same time!



How do we prepare ourselves in Christ to meet others whom we do not know?

Maybe you are the ones who are good at walking with your neighbors, reminding others of Jesus’ promise that we are never alone! He is always by our side! There were several experiences that again helped us to see this accompaniment in action through the Women of ELC-PNG. As we visited the area known as Finschhafen for the 60th Anniversary of Women’s Ministry, we were met with People of all ages in a ‘Sing-Sing’. This is how they welcomed us as our speedboat pulled up onto the shore and danced by our sides all the way to the Open-Air Meeting Place. It was again a joyous time, but I felt so surprised by their celebration of our arrival...this saint and sinner felt so loved to just be who I am and Whose I am, while I was invited to their dance!



How might we walk (and dance) with our neighbors in the days ahead?

Yes, Jesus walks behind us, too! He has our backs and helps us when we find ourselves in times of trouble or challenges! Yet, He is there encouraging us to go forward, working with others in peace and compassion. Now that we have returned home from PNG over 7 months ago, we continue to find ways to stay in touch. We hear from some of the women about fun times they are having with their families or working on Sunday School, or other projects. Once we connected, we are changed in our hearts to carry our “Companion Cousins in Christ”! Praying for the Koté District – PNG has become a regular part of my spiritual practice by whispering the names of the women who touched my heart by accompanying me.

Mark 12: 31 reminds us, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Friends, How shall we love the PNG?

Submitted by Pastor Janice Hawley

Discipleship

Discipleship is a lifelong journey of living out and spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.

Two ways Women of the ELCA participants can carry out discipleship is by studying and serving others.

We can study the Bible together. The Summer Bible Study is “I am worthy” by the Rev. Sara Olson-Smith. You can download the three studies or find them in the Gather magazine.

One way to serve is by making kits for Lutheran World Relief. If you go to the LWR website there are instructions for making personal care kits, baby care kits, school kits, and fabric kits.

If your group is not already doing so you could also start making quilts to be given to LWR. You will also find instructions about making quilts on the LWR website.

The quilt ministry is the longest running program for LWR. It started in 1945 when quilts were first distributed to families in war-torn Europe following the Second World War.

I encourage you to carry out your discipleship by studying together and serving others.

Submitted by Rhonda Templing, Board Member

SHOUT-OUT TO CHURCHWIDE STAFF

Women of the ELCA staff received a total of 26 awards from religion communicator organizations, including four Best in Class, three Category Winner and 10 Award of Excellence awards. The Religion Communicators Council and Associated Church Press honored *Women of the ELCA*, *Boldcafe*, and *Gather* magazine for work completed in 2025.

There are a couple of award winners that many of us have noted and admired. First, in the Category—Logos and Branding for a Single Work, the logo and promotional material for the 2026 Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering received an award. From the first time I saw the bright pink logo with the *I am worthy* (all in lower case letters) theme, I was struck by its profound meaning. I can’t wait to see the logo and theme in action as we experience the Triennial with our dear friends in Christ.

Next, how many of you remember the beautiful image of Mary Magdalene on the cover of the 2025 fall issue of the Gather magazine? Again, from the time I got the issue from my mailbox, I was stuck by the beauty of the image by Rev Stacy Boorn. It received multiple awards as a single work illustration and an award of excellence as a magazine cover.

The Gather magazine received many awards, including an honorable mention Best in Class award for a Denominational or Special Interest Magazine and, likewise, Boldcafe received the award in the Newsletter category.

Please go to [Women of the ELCA staff received a total of 26 awards from two religion communicator organizations - Women of the ELCA](#) to read about all of the awards.

Submitted by Vickie Donnell, Board Treasurer

FINANCIAL REPORT

Again, we celebrate the generosity of the women of the Central States Synod. The following financial report was given at the most recent board meeting via Zoom on June 17th.

Fund Balances:

Operating	\$30,147.82
Barbara Nelson Scholarship	\$12,104.59
Lynn Starr Education Scholarship	\$ 5,937.96

Two points that should be noted. The generous balance in the operating fund reflects that 2026 is a non-convention year when expenses are less. As you have read elsewhere in this issue, there will be five \$600 scholarships awarded from the balance reflected in the Education Scholarship Fund. Congregational units and individuals should always keep in mind this is a worthy fund that is utilized every year as scholarships are awarded to deserving young women in the ELCA.

Submitted by Vickie Donnell, Board Treasurer



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Save the date! Lutheran World Relief Ingathering!

Exciting news!

Central States Synod will have six ingathering sites for the collection of Lutheran World Relief quilts and kits

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (St. Louis)
October 17, 2026, from 10am – 12pm
Contact: Eunice Halverson
Eunice.halverson@yahoo.com or
314-269-7994

Our Savior's Lutheran (Jefferson City)
October 17, 2026, from 9am -1pm
Contact: Gloria Sharp
gisssharp@aol.com or
573-462-9758

St. John's Lutheran (Pittsburg, KS)
October 20, 2026, from 2:30pm – 4:30pm
Contact: Peggy Chapman
jdchapman@ckt.net or
620-231-2384

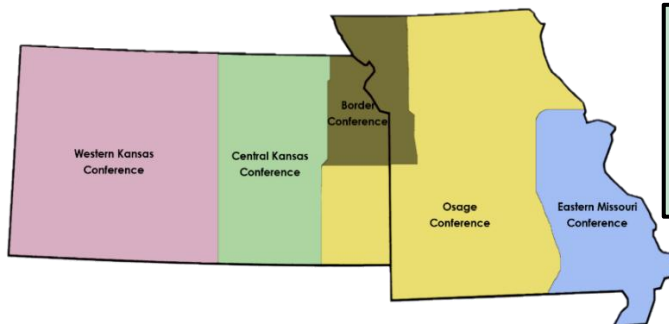
Christ Lutheran (Wichita, KS)
October 20, 2026, from 9am – 12pm
Contact: Rosie Harder rosieharder14@gmail.com or
316-300-3233

Trinity Lutheran (Hays, KS)
October 21, 2026, from 9am – 12pm
Contact: Church office
office@trinityhays.org or
785-625-2044

St. John's Lutheran (Salina, KS)
October 22, 2026, from 9am – 12pm
Contact: Marty Ryan martyryan@cox.net or
785-342-1932

Lutheran World Relief's approximate cost to transport, process, store and deliver the quilts and kits to those in need is \$4.00 per item. If you or your unit would like to contribute to this very worthy cause, please make the checks out to Central States Synod, Women of the ELCA and mail to Vickie Donnell, 4672 East Hidden Oak Place, Springfield, MO 65802. Please mark that Lutheran World Relief postage on the memo line.

Thank you to our Cluster Coordinators



**OSAGE CLUSTER
COORDINATORS**
Mick Friberg
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Becky Verslues

**BORDER CLUSTER
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Sarah Dunning

**WESTERN KANSAS CLUSTER
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**CENTRAL KANSAS CLUSTER
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**EASTERN MISSOURI CLUSTER
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2026 Osage Cluster Event
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Camdenton, MO
Saturday, June 13, 2026



The Osage Cluster met on a very rainy and stormy morning at Our Savior's Lutheran. A total of forty-three ladies attended the event. The meeting opened with group singing led by the awesome Our Savior's Praise Team! Our theme for the day was "Vessels of Grace".

Pastor Kim Knowle-Zeller (Cole Camp, MO) led us in a Bible Study based on Ephesians 2:8 – "For it is by grace you have been saved; ...". She also shared excerpts from her recent book "Small Steps".

The offering for the event totaled - \$869.00, which was designated as follows: \$217.25 for the Women of the ELCA Churchwide and \$651.00 for the Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Fund.



Louise Ahrens, President Central States Women of the ELCA, shared recent updates and future events happening within our synod.



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Sharing a delicious lunch.

Pictured here: President Louise Ahrens with her husband, Boyd; Karen MacDonald, Vice-President of CSS Women of the ELCA; and Pastor Kim Knowle-Zeller.



Our guest speaker for the afternoon was Pastor Jenny Jackson, First Lutheran, Topeka, KS. Jenny traveled with Pastor Janice Hawley, Julie Carlson, and Pastor Gary Teske to the Kotte District Papua New Guinea, our companion synod, in November 2025. She shared with us her memorable events of their trip (with some adventures thrown in). Such an interesting and exciting presentation!!

Submitted by Janice Gerken, Secretary

Cluster Gatherings Updates

The Clusters are continuing to have their Gatherings.

Eastern, Osage and Border Clusters have all had successful Gatherings.

Future Gatherings

Central Kansas Cluster on August 1 in Hutchinson, KS at Emmanuel Lutheran with Julie Carlson as their Papua New Guinea speaker.

Western Kansas Cluster on August 29 in Hays, KS at Trinity Lutheran with Pastor Jenny Jackson and Julie Carlson as their Papua New Guinea speakers.

Border Cluster will meet on September 26 in St. Joseph, MO at First Lutheran.

Best wishes to these three clusters.

We look forward to hearing about the next three Cluster events and seeing pictures.

Submitted by Gaye Mizell, board member

2026 Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Fund Recipients



Nyah Dogwiler
Messiah Lutheran Church
Springfield, MO
University of Kansas

The Lynn Starr Education Scholarship is named in honor of the first president of our Central States Women of the ELCA. Lynn passed away in early 2024. She was instrumental in getting our organization started. Lynn was a mentor to many and active in the congregational unit at Messiah in Springfield, Missouri. Pictured are the five recipients, each receiving a \$600 scholarship. We look forward to hearing about your journeys.

Congratulations!!



Isabella Keesee
Zion Lutheran Church
Phillipsburg, KS
Creighton University



Gracie Scofield
Walsburg Lutheran Church
Leonardville, KS
Kansas State University



Leah Konen
Salem Lutheran Church
Lenexa, KS
Emporia State University



Kaitlyn Maloy
Trinity Lutheran, Chesterfield, MO
University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill

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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.

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.

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 three recent Cluster events!

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