

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

2023 Central States Synod Assembly Actions

Number	Subject	Action
SA 23.01	Resolution to Encourage Development of Mission Partnership Support “One Body Together in Mission”	Congregations were encouraged to learn more about Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities through mission trips, inviting a speaker to their worship service and to support SAWCs through financial support and prayer.
SA 23.02	A Season of Global Awareness: Remembering our Companion Synods and ELCA ministries around the world	Communication was shared with the synod encouraging congregations to remember and pray for our companion synods.
SA. 23.03	Creation of a Synod Campus Ministry Team	A team has been formed, comprised of campus pastors and other supportive individuals.
SA.23.04	Bethany Village Chaplaincy Endowment Support	The synod shared information and encouraged congregations to collect offering support the endowment funds of Bethany Village on the second Sunday in November.
SA.23.05	Thanksgiving for Ministry	The assembly joined together in prayer.

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

2024 Central States Synod Assembly Proposed Resolutions

Number	Name	Summary
SA 24.01	A Season of Global Awareness; Remembering our Companion Synods and ELCA ministries around the world.	The season of Epiphany be designated as a “Season of Global Awareness.” October 6, 2024, be designated to celebrate our relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Urals, Siberia and Far East. February 23, 2025 be designated to celebrate our relationship with the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea.
SA 24.02	Bethany College	Synod staff, clergy, and congregations of the CS encourage students to consider attending a Lutheran institution of higher learning. Designate the Sunday nearest October 15 th each year as Bethany College Sunday.
SA. 24.03	Resolution to Become a Reconciling in Christ Synod	The Central States Synod will become a Reconciling in Christ Synod and adopt the statement of welcome, “Traveling the way of Jesus, who commanded his followers to love one another as Christ has loved, and believing that all persons are created in the image of God, this synod welcomes people of every race, background, age, political affiliation, economic and social status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and mental and physical ability. As a synod we strive to enable all people to participate fully in the life and work of the church in the ministry of Jesus Christ.”
SA.24.04	2024 Resolution on Peace and Climate Justice	The Central States Synod commits itself to worship, educate, and advocate for peace and justice for all the Earth. Including prayers for peace in communal worship services and individual prayers. Utilize resources to learn more about our call as earth keepers and peacemakers. Advocate for peace and climate justice through ELCA Advocacy , Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA), and your designated legislators. Highlight peace-making during Advent 2024 and the month of December. Work to end all wars through the above efforts as one way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
SA.24.05	Pastoral Leadership Transitions in the Central States Synod	The Central States Synod will - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give thanks for the work of transition teams, leaders, seminaries and interim pastors - Encourage the identification and development of new leaders - Call on congregations to note the changing circumstances of the pastoral call process. - Share this resolution with congregations entering transition - Engage with the ELCA to offer and learn from shared experiences
SA.24.06	Thanksgiving for Ministry	The Assembly recognizes and gives thanks for ministers and congregations no longer with the ELCA

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

Resolution SA24.01

A SEASON OF GLOBAL AWARENESS

Remembering our Companion Synods and ELCA ministries around the world

Whereas it is important for the people, the congregations, and the leadership of the Central States Synod to be aware that we are part of a world-wide community of faith, the Companion Synod Team calls upon the Voting members of the Central States Synod Assembly to adopt the following resolution.

Be it resolved that the Epiphany Season be designated as a “Season of Global Awareness” for congregations within the Central States Synod and that congregations intentionally lift up the church around the world through prayer, 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 Global Mission Arm of the ELCA such as Missionary Sponsorship and Young Adults in Global Mission as we continue to promote the witness of the Gospel, works of compassion and justice ministry around the world.

Be it also resolved that **Sunday, October 6th, 2024** shall be designated as the Sunday to remember, lift up 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).*

Be it also resolved that **Sunday, February 23rd, 2025** be designated as the Sunday to remember, lift up 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 Epiphany Season which is our season of Global Awareness.

The Central States Synod Companion Synod Team will provide resources for mission education and worship for the Epiphany Season, and additionally, prayer requests, recent news and communications from our Companion Churches prior to the two Companion Synod Sundays to help us to “accompany one another” in our journey as followers, servants and witnesses to Jesus Christ in our respective parts of God’s world.

The Companion Synod Team of the Central States Synod – ELCA

Rebecca Blocksome
Jon Brudvig
Jim Cooper
Keith Holste
Peggy Schaefer
Emily Greble

Penny Holste
Gary Kallansrud
Daniel Lilienkamp
Doug Reed.
Gary Teske
Andrew Beers

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

Resolution SA24.02

BETHANY COLLEGE

Whereas Bethany College, established October 15, 1881, is an institution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Central States Synod.

Be it resolved that the synod staff, clergy, and congregations of the CSS recognize and encourage our youth to consider attending a Lutheran institution of higher learning such as Bethany College which may enhance the future of the ELCA.

Be it further resolved that the Central States Synod and its member congregations will recognize the Sunday nearest October 15th each year as Bethany College Sunday.

Submitted by Rev. David Carlson

Resolution SA24.03

RESOLUTION TO BECOME A RECONCILING IN CHRIST SYNOD

In 2009, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly approved Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust which addressed the question: How do we understand human sexuality, “a wondrous gift,” within the context of Jesus’ invitation to love God and love our neighbor? And while the statement at that time recognized that this church “holds various convictions regarding lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, this church is united on many critical issues . . . to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for their legal protection.”

Since then, the ELCA has grown and continues to welcome and affirm of LGBTQIA+ equality in the church. LGBTQIA+ pastors and deacons have been called and ordained for ministry. Many of our lifelong members have had their marriage vows affirmed in their local churches. We have called LGBTQIA+ rostered ministers to serve as bishops and more than half of the 65 Synods of the ELCA have become Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Synods.

In the Central States Synod, our mission statement declares that we are “united with Christ in baptism, traveling the way of Jesus, joining God’s reign of justice and radical love for the world.” We are becoming a more diverse community of faith through the movement of our congregations and faith leaders. We have 18 congregations and 3 campus ministries have been designated or are going through the process of becoming Reconciling in Christ (RIC). And both of our seminary partners, LSTC and Wartburg, have joined as RIC communities.

Despite this progress, our LGBTQIA+ siblings continue to experience exclusion and harm from people who believe they are acting in the name of Christianity. Many churches who declare “All are welcome” often demonstrate to LGBTQIA+ individuals and families that “All” does not include them.

Since 1983, the RIC program has been a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. Its purpose is to ensure the welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions; and to work for racial equity and commit to anti-racist work and support the national program. The welcoming invitation of RIC is explicit, recognizing the injustices that have occurred in the name of faith.

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

The Central States Synod, stepping into its role as a RIC synod, would continue to travel the way of Jesus, welcoming, including, and celebrating all sexual orientations, gender identities, racial, ethnic, and indigenous backgrounds. We would work toward the full welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy of all. While not mandating any particular action by individual congregations, the Central States Synod will continue to:

- Provide resources relevant to welcoming LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families on the synod's website.
- Emphasize the synod's commitment to welcome all at synod and conference events.
- Promote annual "RIC Sunday" worship services and celebrations in the synod newsletter and other media.
- Advocate (together with the bishop and other synod leaders) for public policies that protect LGBTQIA + individuals and their families.
- Make a meaningful financial contribution to support the national RIC program in an amount determined by the synod council.
- Continue our work for racial justice in partnership with the Synod's Racial Justice Team.
- Encourage individual congregations, when requested, to develop their own welcome statements, recognizing and respecting the importance of each congregation to discern its way to live out Christ's welcome.

While the RIC program is focused on the welcome and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ and working for racial justice, the Central States Synod recognizes that the gospel of Jesus and the welcome of the church extends to all people. It does not draw a distinction based upon racial, ethnic or indigenous background; age; political affiliations; economic or social status; or mental or physical ability. This calls us to be intentional about the ways we extend Christ's welcome to ALL.

Be it resolved that the Central States Synod in assembly become a Reconciling in Christ Synod.

Be it further resolved that the Central States Synod adopt the following statement of welcome: Traveling the way of Jesus, who commanded his followers to love one another as Christ has loved, and believing that all persons are created in the image of God, this synod welcomes people of every race, background, age, political affiliation, economic and social status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and mental and physical ability. As a synod we strive to enable all people to participate fully in the life and work of the church in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Submitted by the Central States Synod Council

Resolution SA24.04

2024 RESOLUTION ON PEACE AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

Stories and images of war around the globe continue to demand our attention and action for peace. The loss of human life in Gaza, Ukraine, Syria, and other nations climbs each day.

The ELCA Conference of Bishops has issued statements urging legislators and leaders to work for a cease-fire in Gaza, and ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has publicly called for peace in the Holy Land. (1)

Our ELCA Social Statement, **“For Peace in God's World,”** adopted in 1995, outlines biblical and theological teaching on war and peace, and our call to be peacemakers. (2)

In addition to the loss of human life, the environmental costs of war are deep and long-lasting. Damage to water sources and water infrastructure, air pollution, and contamination of soil harm both human and other-than-human creatures. (3)

Active warfare multiplies the already significant output of greenhouse gas emissions from militaries, exacerbating climate change. Bombings devastate land, biodiversity, and natural habitats. (4)

Intersecting issues of hunger, poverty, war, climate change, and injustice plague those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged and imperil the future for generations to come.

Therefore, be it resolved that faith communities and individuals in the Central States Synod commit themselves to worship, educate, and advocate for peace and justice for all the Earth by:

- 1) Including prayers for peace in every communal worship service and in our individual prayers.
- 2) Utilizing the resources of the ELCA and other appropriate sources to learn more about our call as earth keepers and peacemakers. (5)
- 3) Advocating for peace and climate justice through [ELCA Advocacy](#), Kansas Interfaith Action ([KIFA](#)), and your designated legislators. (6)
- 4) Highlighting peace-making during Advent 2024 and the month of December, utilizing the resources of the 2024 Creation Care Plan. (7)
- 5) Working to end all wars through the above efforts as one way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions as part of the ELCA efforts to reach net-zero by 2050. (8)

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

Let us pray. We pray for the end of all wars and for peace forevermore. We pray for grace, forgiveness, generosity, and peace among all nations. Give us faith to go forward caring for all people, knowing that you are leading us, and your love is supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table

Larry Erickson, First Lutheran, Manhattan, KS

Jane Meyerkord, Lutheran Church of the Atonement, Florissant, MO

Cindy Gross, Bethel Lutheran, University City, MO

Sheryl Mehrhoff, St. Andrew's Lutheran, Columbia, MO

Keith Mundy, Atonement Lutheran, Overland Park, KS

Rev. Noni Strand, Overland Park Lutheran, Overland Park, KS

Rev. Janice Hawley, Holy Cross Lutheran, Creve Coeur, MO

Don Arney, Immanuel Lutheran, Kansas City, MO

Rev. Melissa Woepfel, Bethany College, Lindsborg, KS

Rev. Kaylie Ines, Olsburg and Walsburg Lutheran, Olsburg and Leonardville, KS

Rev. Christyn Koschmann, Martin Luther Lutheran and St. Luke's East Hospital, Lee's Summit, MO

Gary and Jeani Anderson, First Lutheran, Topeka, KS

- (1) <https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/Recent-News-Stories?page=0><https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/Recent-News-Stories?page=0>
- (2) <https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Peace>
- (3) The multiple impacts of war. *Nat Sustain* 6, 479–480 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-023-01146-0>
- (4) <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/how-war-impacts-the-environment-and-climate-change/>
- (5) Resources include:
 - a. ELCA Social Statement, “For Peace in God’s World,” with its accompanying study guide
 - b. ELCA Social Message, “Earth’s Climate Crisis,” with its accompanying study guide
 - c. The Earth Charter (<https://earthcharter.org/read-the-earth-charter/>)
 - d. Books, such as The Planet You Inherit: Letters to My Grandchildren When Uncertainty’s a Sure Thing, by Larry Rasmussen, and Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World, by Katharine Hayhoe.
 - e. Additional resources to be offered by the CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table <https://lrc-css.square.site/>
- (6) Find out who your legislators are at <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>
- (7) Download the CSS Creation Care Plan at <https://lrc-css.square.site/css-creation-care-plan> to see the resources for the month of December with suggestions.
- (8) The 2022 CSS Assembly and 2022 Churchwide Assembly adopted measures calling for a reduction in GHG emissions by 50% in 2030 with a goal of reaching net zero by 2050.

Resolution SA24.05

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS IN THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD

Congregational leadership transitions are the work of the whole church. They involve bishops and synod staff members, who help guide the process and who work with pastors who might be appropriate candidates for ministry in that particular congregation. But pastors do not simply drop out of heaven, but are raised up from the pews of congregations. Thus, these transitions also involve Sunday school teachers, confirmation class leaders, synod candidacy committees, seminaries, and seminary field work and internship sites, as they all work to prepare candidates for ordination and service across the church.

When the ELCA was formed in 1988, the call process was shaped very differently from what it is today. In 1988, it assumed a lot of homogeneity of both congregations and pastors. There was a basic assumption that pastors were interchangeable, and the skill sets required in one setting could easily transfer to any congregation. Today, we recognize that both those assumptions are misplaced, and more care is needed to get a good fit of pastor and ministry site in order for ministry to flourish.

At the same time, technology has reshaped the process. Instead of paper files held in the synod office, electronic documents in a churchwide database makes all that information available across the ELCA at the same time.

For both these reasons, the call process documents have become longer and more detailed. Instead of check marks to answer multiple choice questions, we now ask rostered ministers and congregations in transition to reflect on themselves as they answer questions with a paragraph or two of concise, well thought-out sentences. Their answers describe the unique gifts, challenges, and opportunities, so that the transition results in better matches between congregations and rostered ministers. This kind of reflection takes time, but the experience of many call processes across the ELCA, has taught us that this is time well spent.

When congregations reflect more on their identity, community, mission, gifts, and leadership needs *before* looking at specific candidates, and when candidates reflect more on their vision for ministry, their gifts and talents, and the settings where they feel called to serve *before* looking at specific congregations, the more likely it is that the call process will result in a good “fit” between the congregation and the candidate. In addition, the time spent in reflection has proven to help pastors and congregations get off to a better start together when a call is extended and accepted.

At the same time, the ELCA is facing an imbalance between rostered leaders seeking calls and congregations seeking rostered leaders. Over the last several decades, the ELCA has seen large numbers of pastors retire or leave the ministry each year, while smaller numbers of new pastors have entered the ministry to take their places. Making matters worse, the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic led more pastors to retire or leave the ministry in recent years than would be expected in an ordinary year. A surplus of clergy 40 years ago has become a clergy shortage today.

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

Different parts of the ELCA are hit in different ways by this imbalance. Some synods have plenty of pastors to serve their congregations, while other synods – including our Central States Synod – feel the shortage of pastors much more acutely. Simply identifying pastors and candidates who are willing to look at calls in our synod stretches out the length of the process. In addition, candidates also have to balance other considerations such as a spouse's employment, special needs for their children, and the adaptability of congregations to be receptive to their particular gifts and life situations.

Instead of getting five or six candidates to consider, a call committee might receive three or two or only one – and those candidates are likely to be looking at other congregations at the same time. For some congregations, even identifying one candidate for them to consider can take quite a while.

The ELCA as a whole and our synod in particular are involved in the same kinds of leadership transition conversations as congregations seeking new pastors. The 2022 ELCA Churchwide Assembly authorized the establishment of the Commission on a Renewed Lutheran Church. Candidacy committees are reexamining how candidates are prepared and certified. Seminaries are reexamining their curricula, their facilities, their structures, and their teaching methods for preparing leaders for the church. The overall result is a changing pattern for rostered leader deployment and service.

The long-term solution to this leadership imbalance is to increase the number of pastoral leaders, as well as other items arising from all these transitional conversations across the ELCA. But meanwhile, congregations, rostered ministers, bishops, and other leaders cannot stop and wait for the long-term solutions to bear fruit.

Here in our synod, we have been working to address this shortage of pastors by practicing healthy habits for dealing with change. We have become especially curious about our communities, encouraging healthy self-assessment of our own gifts and needs, engaging in playful experimentation with alternative arrangements for ministry, and developing an entrepreneurial spirit that seeks out new gifts as well as new uses of old gifts. We have worked to raise up and support deacons, Parish Ministry Associates, and Synod Authorized Ministers, adding to the pool of possible leaders to serve our congregations. We have also changed how the synod supports congregations with transitional leadership, expanding the forms that support may take.

And while those efforts continue, the work of congregational transitions goes on.

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

Be it resolved that the 2024 Synod Assembly of the Central States Synod:

1. gives thanks for the work of
 - a. call committee members and congregation council members as they faithfully reflect on their congregation's mission and ministry during leadership transitions;
 - b. pastors, deacons, candidates for the ministries of Word and Sacrament and Word and Service, PMAs, and other pastoral leaders as they faithfully reflect on their gifts for ministry and how God is calling them to put them to use;
 - c. seminaries, our synod candidacy committee, and others involved in leadership development, as they prepare leaders for service across this church;
 - d. intentional interim pastors, interim consultants, other transitional leaders, and synod staff as they support congregations and related organizations going through leadership transitions;
2. encourages the raising up of new leaders by asking
 - a. congregational leaders to seek out, invite, and support those in their midst who might be suitable candidates for ordination, for entering the Parish Ministry Associate program, or for preparing to serve in other leadership positions in the church;
 - b. pastors and those who work with youth to plant seeds that might lead them to consider pastoral or other leadership positions as they grow and mature;
3. calls on congregations and leaders across our Synod to take note of the changing circumstances of pastoral call processes, and ask that
 - a. all congregations entering a leadership transition recognize the increased length of time these transitions take, and ask that they be open to new and creative partnerships with transitional leaders throughout the entire transition;
 - b. as smaller congregations face the departure of their previous rostered minister, they look at the possibility of shared pastoral leadership through a parish relationship;
 - c. as larger congregations with multiple rostered leaders face the departure of one of their pastors, they look at the possibility of adding a lay staff member (or members) rather than automatically seeking to replace one pastor with another pastor, recognizing that calling multiple pastors in one congregation means some other congregation will go without any pastor at all;
4. directs the bishop and synod staff to share this resolution with congregations, parishes, and other organizations who are entering leadership transitions in their ministries; and
5. asks our bishop, synod staff, and synod council to engage with the ELCA Conference of Bishops, ELCA churchwide staff, ELCA Church Council, seminaries, and their counterparts in other synods to learn from their experience with leadership development and congregational leadership transitions, and to offer them our experience.

Submitted by:

Rev. Peter Rehwaldt

Rev. Keith Hohly

Rev. Jealaine Marple

Rev. Merle L. Brockhoff

Rev. Cynthia Schnaath

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

**Resolution SA24.06
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. Gerry Leaf, retired, McPherson, KS (12/6/2023)

The Rev. Ray Otto, retired, St. Joseph, MO (1/12/2024)

The Rev. Len Dale, retired, Olathe, KS (1/22/2024)

The Rev. Roger Gieschen, retired, Lenexa, KS (1/23/2024)

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. Richard Mueller, from Lutheran Church of the Atonement, Florissant, MO (7/1/2023)

The Rev. Cynthia Schnaath, from Interim Ministry, Lenexa, KS (8/1/2023)

Cherri Jestmore, Deacon, Atonement Lutheran Church, Overland Park, KS (8/1/2023)

The Rev. Mike Malone, from On Leave from Call, Jackson, MO (11/1/2023)

The Rev. Linda Bollenbach, from Disabled Roster, Springfield, MO (10/1/2023)

The Rev. Katherine Hayes, from On Leave from Call, Springfield, MO (10/1/2023)

The Rev. Barb Jones, from On Leave from Call, Shawnee, KS (3/1/2024)

The Rev. Merle Brockhoff, from Interim Ministry, Kansas City, MO (4/1/2024)

The Rev. Randy Chapman, from Specialized Ministry, Topeka, KS (4/1/2024)

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

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) disaffiliated from the ELCA, discerning that they were called to participate in God's mission through other denominations:

Zion Lutheran Church, Wakeeney, KS took their second vote to disaffiliate on 6/25/2023.

Zion Lutheran Church, Beloit, KS, took their second vote to disaffiliate on 8/27/2023.

Trinity Lutheran Church, Otis, KS took their second vote to disaffiliate on 12/3/2023.

After many years of faithful ministry, the following congregation(s) closed, trusting that in the midst of death, there is always resurrection, and the mission of the church continues:

Cross of Glory Lutheran Church, Derby KS, (10/15/23)

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