

35th Annual Convention Shines the Light of the Lord

“The LORD is my *light* and my salvation whom shall I fear?”
Psalm 27:1a

Gathered together in the *Light* of Christ, the Women of the ELCA from across Kansas and Missouri celebrated God’s goodness and grace and committed to share Christ’s *Light* in one bright, spirit-filled reunion at the 35th convention of the Central States Synodical Women’s Organization in Independence, MO.

Upon arrival to Stoney Creek Hotel, women visited in the hospitality room, delivered in-kind gifts, walked the beautiful 1.2 mile loop trail on the property, shopped at the Bridge fair trade shop,



2022-2023 Board Members Leading the 35th Convention
(L to R) Rev Dinah Dutta, Vickie Donnell, Janice Gerken, Gaye Mizell,
Kathy Steinke,
Susie Borgstrom Pat Dunavan, Pastor Jill Duis

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and participated in a unique scavenger hunt.

The theme, “*The LORD is My Light*” shone throughout the weekend beginning with the enlightening keynote message by author Kelsey Scism on Friday evening followed by Holden Evening Prayer opening worship led by Bishop Susan Candea.

Lori Garcia, CWO Executive Board member, offered greetings from churchwide, guidance during meetings, and led a thoughtful Saturday morning devotion based on our convention scripture verse.

Light was the theme woven throughout the break-out sessions. Our convention chaplain, Rev. Linda Daniels-Block, pastor at Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Hazelwood, MO, spoke about living in the *Divine Light* while finding peace and joy.

Lori Garcia hosted a session, *Sustaining the Light*, where we examined the importance of invitation and hospitality to engage new women and develop partners within our congregational units. Heather Lynn and Christal Tycksen from Child Safe of Central Missouri spoke about how we, as Christian women, can be the *Light* in dark times to children suffering from child abuse. The final break-out session was a robust sing-along where women were able to share *God’s Light* through song and fellowship.

BINGO was an enjoyable activity offered on Saturday afternoon with many winning fun prizes.

Following dinner on Saturday evening, lively entertainment was provided by Dan Meers, 30-year mascot of the Kansas City Chiefs. Dan shared his faith journey and insights gained during a miraculous recovery from a devastating accident zip-lining at Arrowhead Stadium. His fun and relaxed presentation created a memorable highlight of the convention. Winners of the ‘mini raffle’ and silent auction then collected their goodies and many gathered for final photos.

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Convention

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Sunday morning Holy Communion service was officiated by CSS Board members Pastor Jill Duis and Rev Dinah Dutta. Pastor Jill preached eloquently about trusting in the *Light* of our Savior and being the *Light* for others

The weekend was packed with prayer and worship and of course, *Light*. Thank you to all who travelled to join in shining your *Light* and share the love of God in Christ Jesus. We look forward to the next time we gather in convention in 2025.

Submitted by: Kathy Steinke

12th Annual Triennial Convention and Gathering



The *Twelfth Triennial Convention* is approaching, scheduled for September 19th – 21st. Voting members from our synodical organization are: Louise Ahrens, Jill Duis, Rev. Dinah Dutta, Rhonda Schlesselman, and Gloria Sharp, president.

The *Triennial Gathering* follows convention on the 21st – 24th. Both events will be held at Sheraton Phoenix Downtown in Phoenix, Arizona.

[New Triennial Event Page - Women of the ELCA.](#)

Sharing the Light with In-Kind Gifts —Once We Were Refugees

What takes 3 vans and 2 pickups? Moving the amazingly generous amount of donations to Once We Were Refugees (OWWR), of course. Congregations from across the Synod heard the call to help the organization, gathered items to donate, and sent them to our convention where they were collected to be used teaching sewing skills to refugee women



in the Kansas City area. At least 14 sewing machines, many yards of fabric, sewing notions, cutting boards and scissors, and many bags of yarn were gathered at the convention. In total, approximately

\$5,797 of in-kind items were donated. Additionally, offerings of \$996.50 were received. Pastor William Say and his wife, Ann, who direct the program, were thrilled with the donations and expressed their thanks to all who contributed.

Once We Were Refugees Board Members

Top Photo: Ken Heitland, Technical Director. Lower Photo (L to R): Ann Say, Founder and Director of Education and Toni Say, Donations Coordinator

Submitted by: Pat Dunavan



Osage Cluster Coordinators
(L to R) Becky Verslues,
Mick Friberg

Being the Light—Through our Generosity

Just as the Lord is our *Light*, we in our generosity are a *light* to others. Our ladies answered the call of the “...*Light*” in their generous giving during the three days of the convention.

The *Love* offering on Friday evening at the opening worship service totaled \$2,476. Of that amount, there were several specifically designated gifts: \$570 for Once We Were Refugees, \$100 as Thankoffering, which has been forwarded to CWO, and \$100 as a donation to our synodical organization. The remainder, \$1706 was divided as follows: 50% (\$853) to our CWO, 25% (\$426) to Child Safe of Central Missouri, and 25% (\$426) to Once We Were Refugees.

The offering received at the closing worship service on Sunday morning totaled \$1,124.02. Of that amount, \$75 was specifically designated for Katie’s Fund and has been forwarded to CWO, 50% (\$524.51) will support the Education Scholarship Fund and 50% (\$524.51) will be used by the synodical organization to defray convention expenses.

Once We Were Refugees was designated as the recipient of in-kind donations and specified offerings. The tangible donations included new and used sewing machines, fabric, thread, sewing notions, etc. The estimated value of the items donated was \$5,797.

As is tradition, there was much enjoyment and excitement surrounding the ‘mini raffle’ and Barbara Nelson Scholarship Fund silent auction. The donations for the raffle totaled \$336, while the silent auction totaled \$1045. With the proceeds from the raffle, the scholarship fund, held in a savings account, totals \$2,007.86. The balance of the Barbara Nelson Triennial Convention Memorial Scholarship Fund, invested with Mission Investment, is \$17,671.

Total giving at the convention, including all offerings, auction, raffle, and both tangible and monetary in-kind donations was \$10,808.02. Again the women of the Central States have indeed shown their *Light* to others through their generosity. Thanks be to God!

Submitted by Janice Gerken



Extending “Thanks” for Scholarship Award
(L to R) Vickie Donnell, out-going president &
Dani Kerns

Recipient of 2023 Education Scholarship Extends “Thanks”

Dani Kerns, recipient of a scholarship awarded from the Central States Synodical Organization Education Scholarship Fund attended the convention on Saturday evening. Speaking after the dinner, she extended heartfelt “thanks” for the award.

She attends College of the Ozarks (C of O) in Point Lookout, MO, where she maintains a 3.8 GPA, achieving the Dean’s List in each semester. She will be a junior in Fall 2023, majoring in health science with a minor in chemistry.

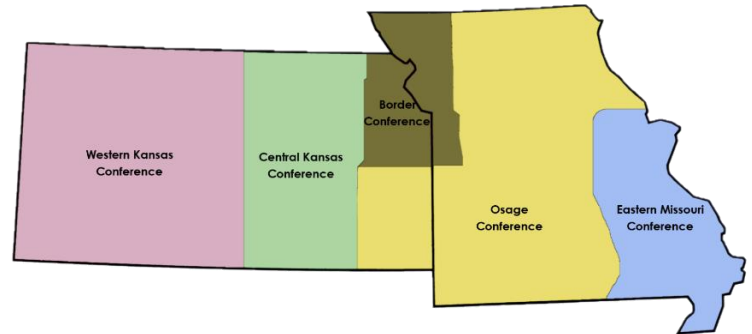
Dani actively participates in Lutheran Student Fellowship on the C of O campus. Her home congregation is Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Osage, KS, where she was baptized and confirmed.

Sustaining the Light—Moving to Cluster Events in 2024

At the 2022 convention, a resolution was passed to reconfigure the number of clusters within our synodical organization from 19 to 5, reflecting the geographical areas of the Central States Synod conferences. The Western Kansas, Central Kansas, Border, Osage, and Eastern Missouri clusters were formed from this resolution. Since passage of that resolution, the synodical Board has worked diligently to encourage activities in these newly designated clusters and identify women willing to serve as leaders of each cluster. We are grateful to the women who have said “yes” and stepped forward to take on the role of cluster coordinator.

The Western Kansas, Central Kansas, and Osage clusters have histories of congregational units coming together under the “prior” cluster configuration and have continued to work together in gatherings during the past year. Coordinators will be meeting to plan for the 2024 cluster events. Much progress has been made in the Border and Eastern Missouri clusters where fewer active units were in place. Coordinators have stepped forward and informational sessions were held in both areas—at Hosanna! in Liberty, MO and Trinity in Chesterfield, MO—generating interest in WELCA and upcoming cluster events.

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Map of Cluster Borders

At the convention there was a session planned specifically for cluster coordinators, with an open invitation to all who desired to attend. More than 30 attended and shared their thoughts about the challenges and opportunities that the new cluster configuration present. In addition, the convention evaluation form requested input on what should be included in the events. General consensus was that a common theme should be used across all cluster events and other preferences included worship, Bible Study, music/singing, speakers, and (of course) food. There was suggestion to contact other synodical organizations who have similar structure for their input and suggestions. All input received will be given careful consideration by the Board as planning proceeds.

The Board is committed to partner with cluster coordinators to support their efforts in planning and carrying-out successful cluster events in 2024. Each cluster will have one or more Board members designated as their liaison. The enthusiasm of those at the convention session and the commitment of the Board promises Spirit-filled cluster events. Be watching for more information on when your cluster’s event will happen!

Submitted by Pat Dunavan



Convention Chaplain
Rev. Linda Daniels-Block

Officers Elected at Business Session

Among all the fun of a convention, there is always business to conduct. The business session began at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday morning with the report from the Credentials Committee, given by Marilyn Dial, convention registrar. Registrations, at that time, were a total attendance of 67 which included 23 voting members, 26 participants, and ten guests, with voting strength of 31.

Attention was given to adoption of the standing rules and the convention program booklet. The session was in the good hands of our convention committees led by Mick Friberg, Loretta Holmes, Kara Jecha, Wilma Prifti, Gloria Sharp, Rhonda Templing, Becky Verslues, and Ruth Ann Zenger. Thank you, ladies!

An election was held to fill the positions of president, treasurer, and three board members. We are thankful to the women that responded with 'yes' when asked to have their name placed on the ballot. Gloria Sharp was elected president, Janice Gerken was reelected to fill another term as treasurer, and Rev. Dinah Dutta and Pat Dunavan were reelected for additional terms as Board members. Louise Ahrens was elected as a new Board member.

Janice Gerken, treasurer, presented the financial report for fiscal year ended January 31, 2023. A budget of \$20,400 was approved for the 2024 fiscal year. The offerings received at the convention were most generous and are summarized on page 2 of this issue.

The Reference and Counsel Committee led by Kara Jecha and Becky Verslues led us through the business of adoption of six resolutions. The first resolution adopted was *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* where we committed to fostering attitudes, behaviors, practices, and knowledge that promote and habituate diversity, inclusion, and equity in all levels of the Women of the ELCA. The second resolution adopted was *Calling for the Safety and Protection of Our Children* with several resolve statements that call us to work to protect children from abuse, exploitation, and discrimination. In the third, *Calling for Peace and Unity*, we committed to strive for peace and unity in all we do and say. Those who have faithfully served were recognized in the fourth resolution, *For Recognition and Appreciation*. The fifth resolution, *Caring for Refugees in Our Community*, resolved that the Central States Women of the ELCA will work to share hospitality and support refugees in our communities through a number of initiatives and actions. Last, the sixth resolution adopted was expression of *Acknowledgment and Appreciation* for those responsible for the success of the convention.

Thanks to all who over the past year contributed to the business of our synodical organization. A special thanks to those who took the time to write and submit our most meaningful resolutions. The full narrative of the resolutions will be available in the minutes of the convention to be posted by mid-September at [Women of the ELCA | Central States Synod \(css-elca.org\)](https://www.womenoftheelca.org/central-states-synod).



Gloria Sharp Elected President

I was honored to be elected your next President of the Central States Synodical Women of the ELCA at our convention in June. It was quite unexpected and overwhelming! The Nominating Committee was unable to find any nominees for the office of president. That means according to our Constitution, we elect the president by a nominating ballot! And so!!! Here I am—your new president! Thank you for having confidence in me! Please keep me in your prayers as we travel this journey together.

I want to thank Vickie, our outgoing President, for doing an awesome job as treasurer and then serving as President of our synodical organization the last two years! She has worked tirelessly contacting congregations with

inactive women's units and sharing with them what the synodical organization has to offer. She did an excellent job leading the Board to reorganize our organization into five clusters and setting up a rotation of

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President Elected

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having our convention every two years and a cluster event the alternate year. Thank you, Vickie, for all the time and effort you have given to the Central States Synodical Women of the ELCA. “Well done, good and faithful servant!” Matthew 25:23.

Also, I want to commend Vickie and the entire Board for organizing an exciting convention around the theme, “The Lord is My Light”. The convention was well organized and carried out the theme throughout the weekend! The meaningful worship services, great breakout sessions, awesome entertainment by Dan Meers, and the many fun activities all helped make it a very enjoyable weekend! Thank you, Board, for all your hard work!

I have been part of this organization from the beginning—having been part of the first Board! The Central States Synodical Women of the ELCA has a very special place in my heart! I have met many women over the years through this organization and have made a lot of special friends. I look forward to working with all of you and making new friends!

May God continue to bless the Central States Synodical Women of the ELCA and each of you.

Submitted by Gloria Sharp



Keynote Speaker Kelsey Scism



With storytelling, Kelsey wove the important story of tragedy, joys, and her faith in God into the keynote speech on Friday evening. She reminded those present to stay true to the Gospel and to share that message with all, particularly our young people. Citing examples of faith through the lives of older women, Kelsey explained the importance of sharing our stories with our youth. Faith is born out of all types of life situations. She challenged that we must never forget that a story written over 2000 years ago continues to shape, mold, and guide our lives.

Louise Ahrens Elected to Synodical Board

Louise Ahrens, member of Hosanna! Lutheran Church in Liberty, MO, was elected as a board member to serve a two-year term. She is retired from legal accountancy at various law firms with focus on collections, billing, banking financials, and client relations.

She is active at Hosanna!, serving on the stewardship and audit teams and as co-team lead of the social ministry team. She is currently serving as president of Hosanna!’s congregational unit and has previously served as treasurer.

When nominated she shared that she ‘believes in the mission of WELCA and if she were elected, she would work tirelessly to spread God’s love’.

Welcome to the Board, Louise! Thank-you for saying ‘yes’.

From Darkness into...Light

Child Safe of Central Missouri, Inc. was a recipient of 25% of the offering received at the opening worship service on Friday evening. Heather Lynn, Director of Child Safe, indicated this donation would be used to serve abused children and support families.

Child Safe of Central Missouri is a non-profit agency that serves children and families in 11 Missouri counties. Their mission is to respond to and prevent child abuse, help families heal, and restore childhood hope. The foremost goal of the agency is to prevent a child from having to retell their story, over and over, and to use a team approach to investigate the abuse.

The break-out session was informative providing these statistics:

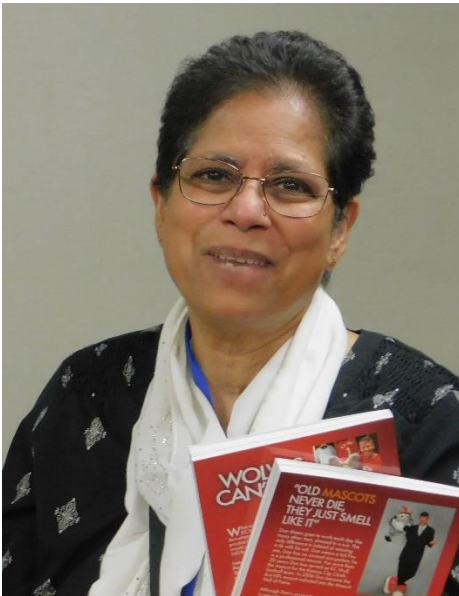
- 1 in 10 children are sexually abused by their 18th birthday
- 90% of abused children know their abuser
- In one year, Child Safe addressed safety issues of more than 400 children

Child Safe provides a forensic interview in a facility designed for children—safe, child friendly, and neutral. Further, free of any charge they serve as a child/family advocate throughout the investigation process and court proceedings. The average cost per child receiving services is over \$2,000.

In 2023, Child Safe is celebrating 20 years of serving children impacted by trauma. We are called to move this societal issue from *Darkness into Light* by enhancing community awareness and a greater understanding of child sexual and physical abuse.



Submitted by Janice Gerken



Let Your Light Shine

Greetings in His mighty name dear Sisters,

I have been thinking of what to share with you since our convention closed. One of my favorite songs by Hank Williams, *I Saw the Light*, is ringing in my ears since I returned to my home following the convention. My heart was filled with gratitude for the Chief's mascot, Dan Meers, and our keynote speaker, Kelsey Scism, as we heard how they live their lives based on the Word of God, living and spreading *Light* wherever they go. The resolution calling us to pray for our children revived my soul since I pray without ceasing for the children not only in my family but all the children of this great country. They are surrounded by so much darkness—I can only name a few—media, technology, and leaders who spread hate and disrespect. How can we teach them to live in the *Light*?

I feel blessed to be a member of the Board for another term—an opportunity to pray for each one of you and to be able to support the ministry of

women, which always excites me. Thank you for electing me. I am always available to listen to you, pray for you and support you in any way you might need me. Do not hesitate to reach out to me. I ask that you pray for me as I continue to seek God's guidance in ways He wants me to serve Him as an ordained minister.

"...Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness...praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH PRAISE THE LORD" Psalm 150: 1b, 2, 5-6.

Submitted by Rev. Dinah Dutta

35th Annual Convention—June 23-25, 2023 Independence, MO



Convention Banner Reflected Our Theme Women from Messiah Lutheran, Springfield, MO (L to R) Jean Bardy, Genny Maroc, Vickie Donnell, Carolyn Malcolm, Shelia Schaefer, & Marilyn Dial Banner made by Pat Lindquist, member of Messiah



Our Ever Faithful Accompanist Jeanette VonHolten



Humor and Inspiration Dan Meers (aka KC Wolf) & Rev Dutta



'Mini' Raffle was in Good Hands, Raising \$336 Lois Viebrock



Central Kansas Cluster Coordinators (L to R) Anna Prockish & Ruth Ann



Sunday Morning Worship (L to R) Carolyn Bauer & Mary Beth Pogue



Patiently Waiting for Dinner (Close L to R) Carolyn Olson & Janice Fewins (Far L to R) Jill Duis & Gaye Mizell



In Joyful Song on Sunday Morning (Far Left Photo) Eunice Halverson (Photo Immediate Left L to R) Kathy Regehr, Gaye Mizell, Anna Borders & Susie Borgstrom (Below Left Photo L to R) Rhonda Schlesselman, Judy Lisenbardt, Janice Gerken & Gloria Sharp (Photo Below L to R) Kara Jecha, Loretta Holmes, & Alice Burnett



Thank you to Mary Liby, our official convention photographer, for these photos



BINGO was a Fun Saturday Afternoon Activity (L to R) Susan Rusk & Beth Rockelman



Items Donated to the Silent Auction Never Disappoint \$1,045 Raised for the Barbara Nelson Memorial Scholarship Fund



Smiles Abounded on Saturday Evening with KC Wolf present (L to R) Phyllis Adkins & Kathy Steinke

CENTRAL STATE SYNODICAL ORGANIZATION WOMEN OF THE ELCA

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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 Vickie Donnell 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.