

Walking Together

2022

United with Christ:



Central States Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Table of Contents

From our Presiding Bishop	Page	3
Bishop's Report	Pages	4-5
Bishop Susan Candea		
Candidacy	Page	6
Mission Endowment Committee	Page	7
Congregational Vitality & Faithful Innovations	Page	8
Synod Mission Table	Page	9
Racial Justice Team	Page	10
Hunger Team	Page	11
Eastern Missouri Conference	Pages	12-13
Campus Ministries		
LuMin St. Louis	Page	14
LCM at KU	Page	15
LCM at KSU	Pages	16-17
Companion Synod	Pages	18-19
Lutherans Restoring Creation	Pages	20
Mission Congregations		
Gathering Table	Page	21
Outdoor Ministries		
Hollis Renewal Center	Page	22
Camp Tomah Shinga	Page	23
Education Partners		
Lutheran School of Theology, St. Louis	Page	24
Bishop Kemper School for Ministry	Page	25
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago & Wartburg Theological Seminary	Pages	26-27
Partners in Ministry		
Bethany Village	Pages	28-29
Kansas Interfaith Action	Pages	30-31
Metro Lutheran Ministries	Page	32
Mosaic	Page	33
Once We Were Refugees	Pages	34-35
Women of the ELCA	Pages	36-37
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service	Page	38
Lutheran Planned Giving/ELCA Foundation	Page	39
Mission Investment Fund	Pages	40-41
ELCA Federal Credit Union	Pages	42-43
Portico	Page	44



From Our Presiding Bishop

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



"And [Jesus] said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation'"
(Mark 16:15).

Dear siblings in Christ,

When I talk about our goal of engaging a million new, young, diverse people I get asked a lot, "I'm not new, young, or diverse. Am I not important to the church anymore?" My answer is always the same, "You've never been more important."

When we committed to our new goal, we identified our purpose as "Activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love." This goal does not happen without the people who are already part of this church. Theresa of Avila talked about the church as the hands and feet of Christ in the world, the very way God will work to engage new people.

Those aren't easy things to do and certainly not ones that only a few of us can do alone. God has blessed us with so many resources to do this work: nearly 3.6 million people, 65 synods, and 350 CWO staff, plus colleges, universities, seminaries, social ministry organizations, and other affiliated organizations, and our separately incorporated ministries. We truly are a church of abundance.

So, what can you do right now?

- Pray. For our church. For one another. For those whom we have yet to meet.
- Find time to listen to people who are new to the ELCA, young, and/or diverse. Share the story of Jesus with them.

Along the way, don't forget: You are important.

Grace and peace,

Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop



Central States Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

From Our Synod's Bishop



Bishop's Report Central States Synod Assembly 2022

United in Christ. All Creation Groans. All Creation Sings.

Last assembly we introduced the synod's new mission statement: ***United with Christ in Baptism. Traveling the Way of Jesus. Joining God's Reign of Justice and Radical Love for the World.*** Following the assembly, I wrote monthly devotions that could be used by congregation councils and ministry boards. The devotions are still available on the [synod website \(www.css-elca.org/devotions\)](http://www.css-elca.org/devotions). During the season of Lent, my weekly reflections focused on what it means to travel the way of Jesus. In my Easter message to the synod, I reflected on God's radical love for the world. The mission statement has shaped not only the theme of this year's assembly but the work I have done throughout the year in my calling as bishop.



United in Christ: This truth has been challenging for us to live out. The strain and stress on our communities following more than two years of dealing with a worldwide pandemic cannot be understated. We are keenly aware of the different perspectives and divisions among us as we engage in the hard work of being the church, and what it means to proclaim and live the gospel in the public spaces of our society as we deal with issues such as climate change, immigration, racism, the impact of being LGBTQIA+ in our world. To remind us that we are indeed **United in Christ**, I have:

- Resumed my travel across the synod to preach and visit congregations. My goal is to visit every congregation of the synod in the next two years.
- Continued to use technology to connect with one another and do work together as the synod council, candidacy committee, mission endowment team, etc.
- Actively participated in the Conference of Bishops and churchwide conversations. I currently serve as the chair of the leadership committee, led a task force to revise the guidelines for Synod Authorized Ministers, and recently began work to review the candidacy process.

All Creation Groans: I am committed to listening to the “groans” and struggles of not only our siblings in Christ but all of creation. While the conversations have and continue to be challenging, we must examine how our climate is being affected by our actions and behaviors, how we all participate in systemic racism, and how our language can dismiss and diminish the identities of women, persons of color, and our LGBTQIA+ siblings. We must find ways to talk and listen respectfully to one another, to be courageous and compassionate as we address the pain of the world, knowing that God so loved this world.

- We hosted a Fall Theological Conference in October which invited us to see with new eyes what is “central to the faith” and how advocacy is gospel work.
- In response to the resolution on racial justice, we sponsored “Diversity Development” training for all rostered ministers and SAMs.
- We continue to participate in the Quality of Call Initiative, a grant-funded churchwide program, designed to listen to the call experiences of women in ministry and work to address the inequities.

All Creation Sings: In the midst of the challenges, struggles, anxiety, and fear, we continue to be the church, to lean more deeply into our call to participate in God’s reign of justice and radical love so that all creation can indeed sing. During Holy Week, Rev. Dave Whetter and I participated in three worship services with the Episcopal Dioceses across the synod for Renewal of Ordination Vows and Affirmation of our Baptisms.

- We sponsored Called to Common Mission, an event that lifted up ways we can work together with the Episcopal Dioceses. We also continue to explore ways to work ecumenically to support the ministry of our congregations.
- Congregations are participating in Faithful Innovations - working in cohorts, to listen, act, and share, in Congregational Vitality - working to discern their purpose, and in Leadership Development - with councils to envision their future.
- We are gathering in person for the first time in three years for our synod assembly and will be gathering in conferences late this summer and early fall to explore, “What does this mean” to be the ELCA, the Central States Synod, and the church in your community.
- We rejoice that Rev. Barb Jones is the new Candidacy Manager for the synod, that Rev. Aimée Appell accepted the position as the Director of Evangelical Mission (DEM) working alongside Rev. Donna Simon, and while we will dearly miss her, we celebrate Dawne Bockelman who after 10 years serving on synod staff will be retiring on July 31, 2022.

I am here to listen and encourage people to reach out to me, as well as invite me to your congregation for conversation.

I continue to be so grateful and honored to live out my call as the bishop of the Central States Synod of the ELCA. Thank you for your support and for your partnership in this important ministry we do together as we hear the groaning of creation and work to bring out joy and singing for all. For we are indeed **United in Christ**.

From Our Synod and Churchwide's Candidacy Committee

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Frederick Buechner



The grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ means that all the baptized, as members of a universal priesthood of believers, are called to a vocation of mission in their daily lives. Members of this priesthood are gifted, enabled, and called to active participation in God's mission, both in their faith communities and in the world. Each person pursues a path of discernment culminating in an awareness of a unique call.

The ELCA candidacy process is meant to be a welcoming and joyful time for people discerning how to serve through the church. It is a formalized – yet personally and relationally focused – journey that assists people in discernment for church leadership, whether they ultimately become rostered or serve in other lay roles within the church. Discernment is a life-long process, which continually assesses how God may be calling a person into a unique ministry. It is a means to determine who might serve as a rostered minister in a Word and Sacrament or Word and Service ministry, as well as who might serve in a variety of lay leadership roles in the church or in the world. The candidacy process will succeed when people graciously discover, through the nurturance of mentors, congregations, and others, how and where to serve according to the Spirit's leading.



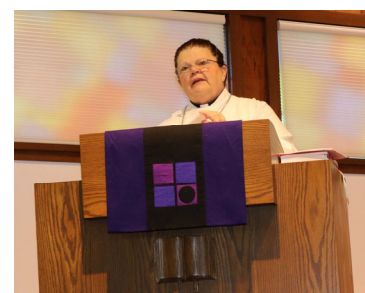
In the Central States Synod, this discernment and candidacy journey is supported and guided by our Candidacy Committee. Rev. Barbara Jones serves as the Candidacy Manager, the first point of contact with inquiries about the candidacy process. Our current Candidacy Committee consists of 12 members. This diverse group of men and women, rostered and lay, hold a common core – serving in God's mission to be the church together, supporting those discerning a call to serve the church. Committee members are assigned to serve one on one with individual candidates as they complete their candidacy journey, communicating regularly by email, phone and personal visits, listening, supporting and encouraging. Collectively, the committee meets three times per year for interviews with candidates at various stages of their journeys.

At this time there are sixteen active candidates in our synod. Ten of these have home congregations in Kansas. Six candidates are connected to congregations in Missouri. Our candidates are engaged in learning through five different seminaries, each following a program of study that best meets their discerned call, needs and context, be that Word and Sacrament or Word and Service Ministry, lay leadership, full-time or part-time studies, distance, on-campus, collaborative learning or the TEEM program. All of these various paths are explored by the candidates with support from not only the synod's Candidacy Committee, but seminary faculty and staff, personal mentors and continuing prayer.



We continue to receive inquiries from individuals who have an interest in learning more about the candidacy process, what it entails and, in some cases, how to proceed and begin the process. In this 21st century, our present time filled with so many changes and concerns in how the church will look, be and serve - The Holy Spirit never ceases to enable, embolden and equip current and future leaders. These leaders are passionate and ready to meet today's challenges, adapt and pivot practices, programs and traditions to serve together with the priesthood of all believers today and in the days to come. This training, learning, sharing and collaboration continues to reflect

the advanced technology now available (distance learning, ZOOM meetings, etc.) as well as the needs of our broken world. Our mission, God's mission never changes - keeping Christ at the center, we serve and love all as our siblings in Christ. We give thanks for all who come to us for guidance and support as they follow the Spirit's nudging.



Yes, your gifts and gladness are just what our world needs! Listen! God is calling!

From Our Synod's Mission Endowment Committee

Central States Synod Mission Endowment Fund – What it does!

The Central States Synod Mission Endowment Fund was established in 1999 to enhance the mission outreach of the synod and is managed by the Mission Endowment Fund Committee which usually meets twice a year (in September and April) to act on grant requests and administer the fund. Grants are awarded to provide funding for:

- **Seminary Scholarships** for approved candidates for ministry currently attending seminary.
\$ 29,370 was awarded this past year for seven candidates
- **Seminary Debt Retirement** to assist first call pastors and rostered ministers new to the synod within their first five years of service to pay down the principle on the debt which they incurred during the course of their seminary education.
\$3900 was awarded this past year for three rostered ministers
- **Continuing education for rostered leaders** to provide additional financial resources for rostered persons to pursue further study, attend conferences, and enhance their ministry skills.
\$2,450 was awarded this past year for three rostered ministers
- **Continuing education for lay leaders** to provide assistance for lay leaders to participate in educational programs such as the Parish Ministry Associate Program or to attend workshops or other educational opportunities.
- **Outreach projects and initiatives** to support grants requested by the Synod Mission Table to support new ministries in the synod a congregation or by another synod ministry for variety of purposes to enhance and revitalize their ministries.
\$22,500 was awarded to the Synod Mission Table for 2021 & an additional \$22,500 for 2022
\$12000 was awarded to Hollis Renewal Center for two different projects
\$10,000 was awarded to a ministry in St. Louis – Sanctuary in the Ordinary
\$1548 for the Gathering Table for building improvements
\$5000 to Lutheran Family and Children Services
\$6, 500 for technology and evangelism efforts was awarded to 13 congregations

(these funds were from reserves from the synod budget and dispersed by the Mission Endowment Committee)

Members of the Endowment Committee are:

Scott Schulte (chair)	Barbara Jones	Bishop Susan Candea
Dennis Allerheiligen	Ralph Donald	Nancy Nagel (vice-president)
Callista Isabelle		Stephen Phelps (Regional Gift Planner)

From Our Synod's Mission Table

Vision: A world experiencing the difference God's grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.

Purpose: Activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice, and love.

Goal: Share the story of Jesus and the ELCA by engaging with 1 million new people as we grow the church together.

Central States Synod Mission Table: to boldly go where no one has gone before, exploring diverse intersections where all God's people are welcome and find a place. To explore new opportunities, launch experiments, and seek out new life.

Our Mission Congregations (Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities):

The Mission Table receives reports, makes grant and authorization recommendations, and seeks to support our mission developers. Currently, we relate with 8 mission sites:

- Iglesia Sagrado Corazon, Garden City, KS, Pastor Odir Flores
- El Divino Nino, Dodge City, KS, Pastor Odir Flores
- South Sudanese Congregation @ First Lutheran, St. Joseph, MO, Pastor Philip Deng
- Gathering Table, Kansas City, MO, Pastor Ann Rundquist
- Mision San Juan de Dios (Partners), Wichita, KS, Pastor Ivan Gonzalez
- Holy Cross South Site, Overland Park, KS, Pastor Joel Hinck
- A local site of the Lutheran Church of Hope, Des Moines, IA worships in Shawnee, KS.

Additionally we are conducting a Worshiping Community exploration in Kansas City with a Middle Eastern Arab community. Two Worshiping Communities are in development in the St. Louis area and should be presented to the Churchwide Mission Table in late 2022.

Our Call: to look for movements of the Spirit across the territory of the Central States Synod...to develop and support missional leaders – lay and rostered... to boldly go where no one has gone before, exploring diverse intersections where all God's people are welcome and find a place. To explore new opportunities, launch experiments, and seek out new life.

Our Team: Aimee Appell, Roy Christell, Scott Musselman, Alix Pridgen, Tina Reyes, Jill Seagle, Jacob Spilker, and **YOU!**



From Congregational Vitality and Faithful Innovations

“Congregational Vitality” is the umbrella under which a number of synod processes reside. We believe that all of our congregations are vital, and that vitality can be increased with intentional interventions. We define vitality like this: Vital Congregations* are places where. . .

- Worship is dynamic and authentic
- Leaders are respectful of boundaries
- Leaders participate in and engage with their local communities
- Members treat each other as fellow members of the body of Christ
- Diversity is honored and respected
- People are willing to engage in holy experiments and open to change and risk
- Faith is nurtured
- Gathering spaces are attractive and inviting

In the Central States Synod, we have utilized several methods of encouraging congregations to assess where they are, plan for new growth, and live into a more vital future.

Congregational Vitality Survey

The CV Survey is a good tool for assessing how well a congregation is listening to the community around it, to the members of the community, and (most importantly) to God’s call to vibrant and faithful ministry. The cost for the survey is just \$100 for any size congregation; the synod covers any additional cost. One of the Directors for Evangelical Mission (Aimee Appell or Donna Simon) will meet with the congregation to review survey results and suggest next steps.

Faithful Innovation Process

Anyone paying attention has noticed that the world around us has changed, in ways that make it more challenging to do ministry “the way we’ve always done it.” The folks at Luther Seminary’s Faith+Lead initiative wanted to address those changes head on and invite congregations to grow more agile as we love and serve our neighbors. The result is Faithful Innovation, a process nurtured within a learning cohort over a period of 9-12 months. Faith+Lead describes the Faithful Innovation as “learning new ways to embody Christian identity and purpose in a changing cultural context.”

Each Faithful Innovation congregation team of 4-6 members participates in three sessions of training. Training One helps participants Listen to God, each other, and their neighbors. Training Two invites participants to Act on what they have heard, in order to learn more. And Training Three asks participants to Share what they’ve learned and to circle back around to more listening, acting, and sharing in order to learn even more.

Along with the training, Faithful Innovation cohort congregations will receive the services of a trained coach, who will convene them monthly to talk about how their experiments are going and what they are learning. Coaching is essential to this process and we are grateful to our talented synod coaches. If you are interested in training to become an ELCA coach, contact either of the DEM’s.

The next Faithful Innovation Cohort will start this Fall.

If you are interested, please contact Donna Simon at dsimon@css-elca.org or 816-419-5575.

Congregational Vitality Gathering

In May, we held our second annual Congregational Vitality Gathering: The Church Council as Engine of Vitality. Presenters talked about all aspects of the formation and function of a church council: choosing the right leaders, keeping the congregation’s purpose at the center of the council’s work, tools for spiritually fulfilling and producing meetings, and structural matters like minding the ELCA constitution.

The Congregational Vitality Gatherings in 2021 and 2022 were held online; we hope to gather both in person and online in 2023. These gatherings are another way that our Congregational Vitality Team is supporting congregations across the synod.

Members of the Central States Synod Congregational Vitality Team are:

Andrew Beers Jane Brda Barb Jones Donna Simon Tom Wehrman

We are at your service and glad to help you grow even more vital.

Rev. Donna Simon

Director for Evangelical Mission

From Our Synod's Racial Justice Team



Racial Justice Team Of the Central States Synod

Since the 2021 Synod Assembly, the Racial Justice Team has organized itself around the directives laid out by the Synod Assembly in Resolution SA21.04. Below are the four committees and their areas of oversight.

Confession & Forgiveness - Education

- provide resources for all rostered leaders and SAMs in the Central States Synod to receive anti-racism training every two years
- provide resources for all leaders and congregations Synod-wide to learn about racism and white supremacy
- Encourage and provide resources for individual congregations to establish Racial Justice teams; to educate our churches about tribal land acknowledgments and the Doctrine of Discovery; to understand the history of violence in our country experienced by people of color in our communities; and to acknowledge and repair these histories

Word - Discernment

- Lead a process of Spiritual Discernment across the Synod around the subject of racial justice

Meal - Artwork & other resources for congregation

- Encourage and provide resources for congregations to incorporate representative artwork, music, and other environmental representations of Biblical personae to include in publications, worship spaces, and other public spaces of the Church
- Encourage and provide resources for congregations to develop practices that affirm and respect diversity and actively move toward equitable inclusion for all

Sending - Advocacy

- Help the congregations and ministries of this Synod connect with local, state, and national advocacy groups, publicizing opportunities for individuals to engage in advocacy work around racial justice issues

To assist us in this work, the RJT is part of the Synod Vitality Grant that began on May 1. This kicked off with a series of conversations with people across the synod, following a discernment model of conversation. The committee is still reviewing the notes from those conversations to look for themes and suggestions that will help us craft future endeavors. Also as part of that grant, we are working on a video series to share with the synod and a synod-wide study of the Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent to occur via Zoom this fall. Finally, we are working with synod staff and individual congregations to make the Intercultural Development Inventory available as a tool for growing skills to navigate cultural differences.

The committee is currently chaired by Aimée Appell. Members are: Jennifer Thomas, Andrew Patty, Darlene Hopkins, Dave Mareske, Meagan McLaughlin, Melissa Woepfel, Dave Strommen, Ruth Zimmerman, Sharon Yelton, Sheri Ellwood, Terry Freeman, Jill Duis, and Cheryl Gorvie.

From Our Synod's Hunger Team

In 2020, a Synod Hunger Team was formed. This team began as a group to evaluate and make recommendations about hunger ministries in the Synod applying for an ELCA Domestic Hunger Grant. From that work, we began to discuss ways we could support both the ministries that received grants, as we all as those that did not. We know that hunger and alleviating food insecurity are issues that affect all our communities—urban, rural, small town, suburban. Ninety-six percent of ELCA congregations participate in some form of anti-hunger work, from community meals to food pantries and more! We give thanks to God for the 63 Central States Synod congregations that gave to ELCA World Hunger directly or through the synod, for a total of \$443,340. We know this amount does not include the generosity of direct giving from individuals from within our congregations. Thank you!



Because of your generosity to ELCA World Hunger, Central States was able to receive 2 Domestic Hunger Grants for 2022, making a total of four hunger ministries receiving grants.

1. Washington Presbyterian Church, Washington, MO — for a weekend Meals on Wheels program that brings free hot lunches to people and families in need
2. God's Helping Hand/Unity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, MO — for the development of a commissary kitchen and community garden
3. The Crossing Outreach, St. Joseph, MO — to provide pickup of leftover food from area grocery stores
4. RSVP of NE Kansas, Maryville, KS —to provide low-cost freezer meals so folk who are elderly or disabled have access to a hot meal a day.



The Team also offered a series of “Food and Faith” Webinars to hear from various hunger ministries: Gathering Table and God's Helping Hand; The Crossing Outreach; RSVP of NE Kansas. The May topic was Hunger and Advocacy and featured speakers from ELCA World Hunger Grants and an ELCA Hunger Advocacy Fellow. These monthly 1-hour zoom calls were educational and inspiring.



Gathering Table Worship & Meal



God's Helping Hand Food Distribution

Another round of Daily Bread Matching Grants became available in April, 2022. These matching grants of \$500 help congregations raise funds for congregation-based hunger ministries. For more information, go to: https://support.elca.org/site/TR?fr_id=1451&pg=entry.

This year's ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering will be held in-person in Chicago from August 25-28. We hope to have 3 CSS folks participate and bring back information, ideas, and energy.

Thanks to Team members: Andrea Hodges, Cindy Kraft, Peggy Schaefer, Rachel Wolf, Ann Rundquist, Donna Simon, and Kendra Nolde.

From Our Conferences - Eastern Missouri

Serving and Loving Their Neighbors!

Throughout 2021 and into the beginning of 2022, the Eastern Missouri Conference Congregations continued doing the work of the church by serving and loving their neighbors near and far.



Outdoor worship at Living Lord

Hybrid was the word for 2021. Congregations in the Conference found ways to offer opportunities for participation in on-site events, outdoor events, and online events. Several churches offered Trunk-or-Treat events, providing a safe way to have fun with their communities. Living Lord held an outdoor Ascension and Fall Kick-off services. Many churches upgraded tech and online presence for the comfort of people still unable to join worship live.

In July, Living Lord offered a hybrid Leadership Lab that was open to youth in the conference to help youth grow in their faith. The event included a weeklong lock-in at the church with faith development each morning and evening with a fun event each afternoon. In the evenings, they joined online with kids and adults from across the country to worship together for a couple of hours.

Congregations also found new ways to advocate and call attention to injustice. One example of this is Christ Lutheran's weekly Vigil for Black Lives. Christ Lutheran gathered with neighboring churches on the street outside the church building to be a voice for change.

Congregations in North County, St. Louis, continued their support for Feed My Starving Children even though they couldn't do an in-person Manna Pack. They held raffles, restaurant fundraisers, and trivia nights to raise money for their next Pack event on July 9, 2022, at Atonement Lutheran Church/School. Feed My Starving Children is a worldwide organization that distributes food to children in schools, orphanages, and clinics to deliver hope and break the cycle of poverty.

Peace Lutheran Church in Washington, Missouri, loved their neighbors throughout Missouri by purchasing \$2.5 million in medical debt. They worked with the New York-based nonprofit RIP Medical Debt to raise funds that were used to lift the burden of medical debt for about 824 Missourians. The debt was purchased for roughly a penny per dollar from various collection agencies. What a blessing!

Holy Cross Lutheran Church helped Afghan refugees who were settling in the St. Louis area after the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. Most of the people were arriving without any belongings. Holy Cross worked with the International Institute of St. Louis to gather household items for those resettling in the area. They have also adopted an Afghani family. Holy Cross is walking alongside the family to offer support and community while they settle in to their new home here in Missouri.



Leadership Lab photo

Reconciling in Christ congregations in the conference gathered to have a booth at the Tower Grove Pride Festival in the city of St. Louis. The theme for the booth was “Lutherans for Love and Pride.” Pastors and congregation members took shifts working the booth and sharing the love of God with everyone they met! They offered “Pictures with a Pastor,” and other small gifts. Brochures with information about the congregations, including service times and other church contact information was also available. It was a wonderful day!



Pride Fest

On Saturday, April 16, 2022, several conference churches held a collaborative Easter Vigil service at the site of the now-closed Resurrection Lutheran Church in the north part of St. Louis City. Resurrection closed its doors earlier this year, and the synod and conference are exploring how best to use the property to benefit the surrounding neighborhood. Right now, a city alderman is using space in the building for his office. While other ideas are being discussed about how to bring new life from the death of this congregation, it seemed fitting to hold an Easter Vigil service to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, who makes all things new and who declares that death never has the final word. The service was well-attended and included a baptism. What a joyous evening it was!

All of this is in addition to the ways individual congregations supported feeding ministries and helped the unhoused and the displaced and others in their communities in other ways. The congregations of the Eastern Missouri Conference will continue to look for ways to work together to show MO love!



Easter Vigil at Resurrectionn Lutheran Church, St. louis, MO

From Our Campus Ministries - St. Louis



In the name of the One who was, who is, and who will be. Amen.

Campus Ministry in St. Louis has been full of blessings and hope throughout the 2021-2022 school year. In August, we began a covenant relationship with United Methodist Campus Ministry, sponsored by Grace United Methodist Church in St. Louis. As an ecumenical campus ministry, we work to use our resources wisely in witnessing the Good News to students and young adults. There is another 'place' to meet students during the week as well as support from two anchor churches (Grace UMC) to support the daily operations. We're still learning what this means – and are willing to keep trying for the sake of our students and the Good News of Christ.

In the spirit of ecumenism, LuMin has joined Rockwell House (Episcopal Campus Ministry) and Ukirk (PCUSA Campus Ministry) to share events for our collective students. Friendsgiving in November, Pancakes and Palms on Mardi Gras, & Ashes on the Go on Ash Wednesday were our three biggest projects this year. Students are cross invited to weekly programming and within our houses for study, laundry, and community.

COVID has continued to ask us to do ministry where the students are – physically, emotionally, and mentally. Our in person gatherings are smaller, which means the outreach work has grown to include more social media presence (thrice weekly posts to support the emotional & spiritual well being of students), program shifts including worship in Forest Park once a month, and a monthly Light & Grace box that includes a spiritual practice, an affirmation, a fidget, and a snack – and often a few other small things to remind students that they are loved and enough.



This year has also been a year where we have grieved the loss of classmates. Six students have died by suicide. There are many factors that contribute to these deaths. Our students (and here I mean all the students at Wash U & SLU) live with high expectations, course overloads, and the everyday stuff of being a young person in the 21st century. Campus Ministry is a place where they can be brave and courageous to say "I can't", "How do I?", and "What is God telling me?"

Looking forward to 2022-2023 school year, I hope to network with professors and faculty in continued ministry and support to all folks on these campuses. I look forward to traveling with the students on an alternative spring break to Puerto Rico and to local campgrounds for retreats. I look forward to the return of our Trivia Night Fundraiser (I promise we will bring it back). And I look forward to all the ways that God is present in the lives of these amazing people and the creation that we share.

In Christ,
Pastor Tina Reyes, she/her/ella,
Campus Pastor

LuMin St. Louis / Rev. Tina Reyes
www.lcmstl.org / admin@lcmstl.org / 314-863-8140
7019 Forsyth Blvd (@Big Bend) St Louis, MO 63105

*LuMin St. Louis is one of three campus ministries in the Central States Synod.
These ministries are possible in part due to the Mission Support of the congregations of the Central States Synod.*

From Our Campus Ministries - University of Kansas

Greetings in the name of Christ! It has been quite the year here at Lutheran Campus Ministry at KU! From calling a new pastor, to re-doing the floor in the chapel at Westwood House, to new experiments in reaching out to students the Spirit has been busy!

In August, Pastor Dan Baldwin began his call at Lutheran Campus Ministry. He comes to us after serving a congregation in the Southeastern Iowa Synod for five years. He and his wife Jen are delighted to be living on an acreage south of Lawrence with their goats, sheep, chickens, rabbits, and dogs. They are foster parents and enjoy the children that come in and out of their care. Pastor Dan enjoys music, biking, hiking, frisbee, and brewing beer. Pastor Dan is excited to be a part of Campus Ministry during this time of change and looks forward to seeing where the future will take us!



We continue to be an ecumenical ministry, working closely with Wesley KU. We are grateful for this partnership and look forward to growing in the work we do together in the name of Christ.

Westwood House was able to return to being a site of rest and reprieve for students this year, as we were able to meet in-person most of the year. We worshipped together and shared many cups of coffee, tea, and chai as we delighted in time for fellowship and conversation. Bible Study took on a new look this year as we invited student so Pizza with the Pastors. Students came with issues, questions, or subjects of interest and Pastor Susan Mercer (UMC) and Pastor Dan led them in conversation addressing these topics from a biblical standpoint. Student Interns led various programs such as Prayer Yoga, Queer Faith, and Vegans, Veggies, and Vibes—a popular weekly free meal kit for students. Pastor Dan was also able to engage with several students who are non-religious or disenfranchised with the church in compassionate conversations where they were able to explore matters of faith without judgement or compulsion. This continues to be a hopeful vision for ministry in the coming years.

The year ended with a wonderful surprise. With the gift of a very generous congregation, we were able to partner with a local food truck and feed 140 students on the last two Wednesdays of the semester! What a wonderful blessing and opportunity for us to continue with our important work of addressing the food insecurity experienced by over 54% of students on campus.

This year also is the 100 year anniversary for Lutheran Campus Ministry at KU! We are planning an event for October to celebrate and we invite you to watch for information from the synod about ways you can join in this celebration. We also invite you to consider supporting us as we continue with our current campaign to raise 100k for the next 100 years—funds which are critical to be able to sustain the ministry of the Gospel we are engaged in at KU!

Finally, we give thanks to God for you, blessed members of the Central States Synod, for your prayers, continued support, and partnership in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Peace be with you all.



Lutheran Campus Ministries at University of Kansas / Rev. Dan Baldwin
www.westwoodku.org / pastorbaldwin16@gmail.com / 785-592-3443
1421 W 19th St. Lawrence, KS 66046

Lutheran Campus Ministries at the University of Kansas is one of three campus ministries in the Central States Synod. These ministries are possible in part due to the Mission Support of the congregations of the Central States Synod.

From Our Campus Ministries - Kansas State University

What an exciting and important time to be involved in the lives of college students, most of whom are young adults, hearing many new voices, living away from home for the first time, and now forming their own beliefs and habits that will shape the rest of their lives! We are blessed to be ministering on a campus where questions of how to feed people and care for the earth are already a part of their in class conversations for many of students. “What does God have to do with all this?” we have the privilege of asking!



The pandemic continued to present a major challenge for our recruitment of new students in 2021. K-State's Orientation and Enrollment Expo, which is normally held for three weeks each June, was cancelled for both 2020 and 2021, and now 2022 as well. This is normally our number one way to reach out to incoming Freshmen, so we especially need your referrals for incoming students who may be interested in LCM! In the meantime, we have taken advantage of other ways of “getting the word out.” We have spent more time tabling in the Student Union, and have also found the Pastor Shelby Bailey Scholarship to be a good tool for connecting with new students.

The Pastor Shelby Bailey Scholarship is awarded each semester to full time students enrolled at K-State. Incoming students can also apply for the scholarship once they have enrolled at K-State. Applicants must be students at Kansas State University, Manhattan Campus, be a member of an ELCA congregation, and have a recommendation from their pastor. Active participation in LCM is also preferred. Application forms will be e-mailed to Synod Con-

gregations, and will be available on our website, KSULCM.ORG. Please pass the word to students from your congregations who may be attending K-State!

We have continued to reach out to K-Students with the good news of God's love through the ups and downs of this past year, with weekly meals, worship services, Bible studies, social events, and service opportunities. These programs have looked a little different than in the past, as we held many events outdoors, and when necessary, indoors with masks. We have followed K-State's pandemic policies during the last year. When K-State lifted its campus mask mandate early this Spring, LCM did as well. Things look more normal now, but the pandemic has reprogrammed all of us in one way or another, including college students. Next year's college Seniors were Freshman when the pandemic first burst into our lives during Spring Break of 2019! Soon, none of our students will remember what pre-pandemic college looked like. We are still learning how to reach out to, and care for, students in this new normal.

Lutheran Campus Ministries at Kansas State University is one of three campus ministries in the Central States Synod. These ministries are possible in part due to the Mission Support of the congregations of the Central States Synod.

One of our greatest assets for this great work to which we have been called is our newly remodeled ministry center! Although we were able to renovate and move into the building in the Fall of 2019, our Spring 2020 Building Dedication was cancelled due to the pandemic, and we were unable to finish all of the work, including new siding and windows until just recently.

Thanks to the generosity of many congregations, individuals, and our Synod, we can now announce that we have rescheduled the Dedication for our now fully renovated ministry center for Sunday, October 9th of 2022. Please mark your calendars, we hope you will be able to celebrate with us!

This new facility has space for studying, for eating, for worshipping, for recreating, and for connecting with others. Our vision for the new Luther House is that it will be a place where any and all K-State students will be met with the unconditional love of Jesus Christ, where they will be welcomed and accepted just as they are, where they will be embraced by the gospel, yet challenged to grow, to listen to others who are different than themselves, and to imitate Christ as they strive to love all others as they have already been loved by Jesus!

Please consider how you may be able to help us achieve this vision for the year and years to come!



Lutheran Campus Ministry at Kansas State University Building Dedication

Sunday, October 9th, 2022 (Tentative Schedule)

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2:30pm to 4:00pm | Open House |
| 4:00pm to 4:30pm | Presentation on the Future of LCM |
| 4:30pm | Picnic |
| 6:00pm to 7:15pm | Worship and Dedication |

THANK YOU, Central States Synod, for your support and partnership in ministry!

Pastor Kevin Clark, Lutheran Campus Ministry at Kansas State University

Lutheran Campus Ministries at Kansas State University / Rev. Kevin Clark
www.ksulcm.org / therevkev@att.net / 785-539-4451
1810 Todd Rd. Manhattan, KS 66502
Walking Together - Central States Synod, ELCA 2022

From Our Synod's Companion Synod

The Covid pandemic and more recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has had a major impact on the work of the Companion Synod ministry during the past year. All visitations to and from our two companion churches, the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (ELCPNG) and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the Urals, Siberia and the (Russian) Far East (ELSUSFE) had to be cancelled or postponed due to the Pandemic. This included plans for three individuals from this Synod to participate in the annual week-long Summer Seminar in the Russian Far East in August of this year. However, missionary Bradn Buerkle is planning to be in the United States this summer on home leave and we are hopeful that this will still take place and he can spend some time visiting in our Synod.



Enjoying the hospitality of St. Luke's congregation in Arsenyev in the Russian Far East. Table fellowship is one of the great rewards and joys of the companion synod ministry. Seated at the far end of the table is Pastor Alexander Lapochenko (right) and Bishop Alexander Scheiermann (left), two key leaders of the Lutheran Church in Asian Russia.

In spite of the pandemic and invasion of Ukraine, the Companion Synod Team has been able to maintain regular communication with our companion churches by means of email and zoom. Bishop Susan and members of the Companion Synod Team have been having regular zoom meetings with Bishop Scheiermann and other leaders of the Lutheran Church in Russia. Unfortunately, due to the war in Ukraine, Pastor Bradn Buerkle and family have had to leave Russia, traveling initially to Istanbul with plans to travel on to Germany.

During the past year congregations and individuals from the Central States Synod continued to provide financial support for the ministry of Rev. Alexander Lapochenko who is serving in the Russian Far East. Contributions from the synod have also provided funds for the overall ministry of the Lutheran Congregations in the Russian Far East. On behalf of our Companion Christians in Russia, we want to thank all of the congregations and individuals who have contributed to the ministry of our Siblings in Christ in Russia.

Companion Synod Ministry, CSS-ELCA
www.css-elca.org/companion-synods

Walking Together - Central States Synod, ELCA 2022

During the past year the Kote District of the ELCPNG elected a new district president, Pastor Erena Waraga following the sudden and tragic death of their previous president, the Rev. Jonati Metu. The people of Papua New Guinea continue to deal with Covid 19 and it has been nearly impossible to travel to and from PNG during the past year. In our communications with the overseas partnership coordinator for the Kote district, Rev. Walter Teunzac, we have repeatedly been asked for information about Covid as they too are being flooded with all manner of information and misinformation.

During the 2019 consultation in Papua New Guinea referred to in the caption above, we agreed to help them raise the funds for new Sunday School materials, a project that has been completed in spite of the disruption of the pandemic. Thanks to all of you whose contributions made this project a success. The consultation participants discussed some additional hopes for our relationship which included, an exchange of visits between the women of the ELCA from our Synod and women from the Women's group in the Kote District. Also, to resume the international Camp Counselor program which would bring young adults from Papua New Guinea to work as camp counselors at Camp Tomah Shinga.

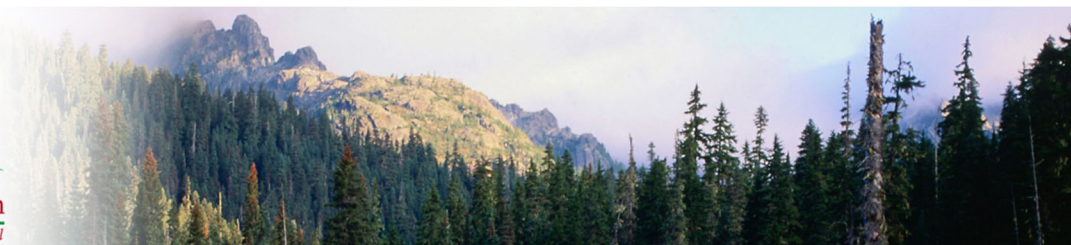
2019 Synod delegation to our companion district in Papua New Guinea made up of Rev. Amy Truhe, Emily Greble, Rev. Gary Teske and Rev. Keith Holste. As a result of this visit, Congregations and individuals from the synod have raised nearly \$10,000.00 to supplement the money being raised by the Kote District to purchase new Sunday School materials.



Relationships are at the heart of our companion synod ministry. For example, those from our Synod who have traveled to Russia or had interactions with visitors from Russia realize the terrible impact of the war in Ukraine, not just upon the people of Ukraine which should never be minimized, but upon the people of Russia as well as they agonize over relatives living in Ukraine and their sons and daughters coming back to them in body bags. Bishop Scheiermann called upon us to continue to love, care and pray for one another and, as he put it, to push back against the alienation that is happening between our countries.

Companion Synod Team members are: Rev. Andrew Beers, Rebecca Blocksome, Rev. Jon Brudvig, Jim Cooper, Emily Greble, Rev. Keith Holste, Rev. Penny Holste, Gary Kallansrud, Alex Lang, Dan Lilienkamp, Doug Reed, Peggy Schaefer, Rev. Gary Teske (chair)

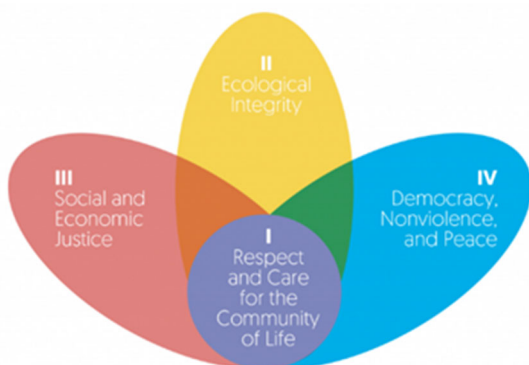
From Our Synod's Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table



Synod Assembly Report from Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table

The Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC) Mission Table promotes Creation Care in the Central States Synod through “cultivating a community of dedicated stewards of earth and neighbor who proclaim God’s promise of hope and healing for all.” (LRC Mission Statement)

Members of the Mission Table continue to work collaboratively with partners in Metro NY, Delaware-Maryland, and New England Synods to implement the Earth Charter. The Earth Charter is a document with sixteen principles that drive a global movement towards a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. More information is available at <https://lutherans-embracing-the-earth-charter.webflow.io/> Please contact Keith Mundy (keith.mundy12@gmail.com) if you and your congregation would like to join this effort.



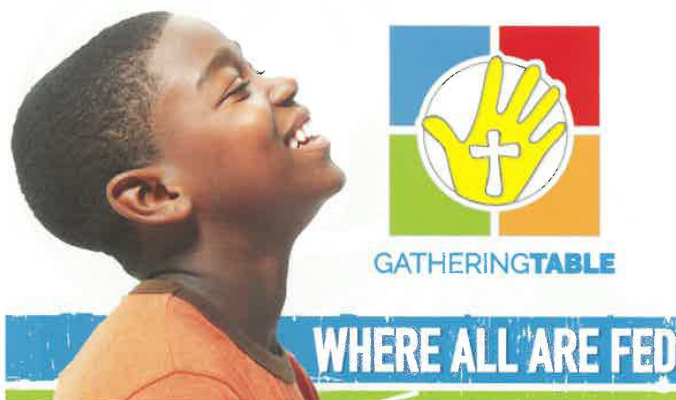
A retreat at Camp Tomah Shinga in October gave us a long-awaited opportunity to meet in person once again, and to invite area congregations and ministry sites to learn more about the work of LRC and the Earth Charter. We have been working closely with Synod Staff for planning for this Assembly.

We encourage ALL CONGREGATIONS and MINISTRY SITES to fill out our new **GREEN Creation Care SURVEY**, so that we can build a network of Creation Care all across the Synod. You may be doing lots of things or maybe you’re wondering how to get started. We want to support you and help you in any way! By building a network across the Synod, congregations and ministry sites can share information, celebrate successes, and learn from one another. So please take a few minutes to fill out the online survey listed below, or found at www.css-elca.org/lrc THANKS!



For more information about the CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table, please contact Noni Strand (nonistrand@gmail.com).

From Our Synod's Mission Congregations - Gathering Table



EXPERIENCING CHRIST WITH OUR NEIGHBORS.
BY INSPIRING HOPE, DIGNITY AND COMMUNITY.

THE GATHERING TABLE DIFFERENCE

The Gathering Table is different from other non-profits because we strive to bring the good news of Jesus and build God's kingdom with the very poor. Those who may not have other opportunities to worship, engage in fellowship, enjoy a nutritious meal, participate in bible study, and holy communion.

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE

We operate on only \$70,000 a year for expenses. Our expenses include food for meals and one part time salary. In 2019, we served over 4500 meals. In 2020, we served over 10,000 meals. Meals are served 8 times a week.

OUR AMAZING TEAM

Our amazing team of regulars and part-time volunteers are committed to helping others. We take our convictions and turn them into action. Think you would be a good fit? Contact us at gatheringtablekc@gmail.com for more information!

VOLUNTEER

We'd love to have you come down and join us. Bring your bible study group in to cook breakfast or lunch, help serve, be a table buddy, and get to know our Parish. We need help in the clothing room, organizing and distributing clothes. Help keep our facility clean. Assist with repairs and plumbing. If you don't have time, we always welcome clothing and food donations.

Gathering Table

"I started coming for the meals, Pastor Ann trusted me and now I help the whole church from mowing the yard to helping move heavy equipment." - Bruce

"Since coming to Gathering Table my life has purpose." - Jennifer



GATHERINGTABLE is Making a Difference



"I ain't had a hot shower in God knows how long til now. Now look at my feet I've had a hot shower and now I am officially clean."
- Brandon



"This is meaningful volunteer work on Saturday and Sunday and doesn't interfere with my job in the school district." - Yvette



"My meals were coming from restaurant dumpsters, what a difference it makes to get a hot, nutritious meal from Gathering Table. Thank you!" - Michelle



33%
OF THE COMMUNITY
HAS NO ACCESS TO
HEAT, ELECTRICITY
OR WATER



"I came here 7 years ago for a hot lunch for me and my nieces. They were baptized several years later and loved Bible School. Now I volunteer with food and clothing. I like the responsibility and Pastor trusts me." - Jennifer

EXPERIENCING CHRIST WITH OUR NEIGHBORS,
BY INSPIRING HOPE, DIGNITY AND COMMUNITY.

GATHERING TABLE

Pastor Ann Rundquist

5001 Independence Ave. - Kansas City, MO 64124
(785) 643-7697 - pastorannrundquist@gmail.com
www.gatheringtablekc.org

From Our Outdoor Ministries - Hollis Renewal Center



Hollis Renewal Center continues to be a ministry of hospitality for the Central States Synod. By providing an affordable retreat space for all, we are able to give space and time away from daily stresses.

Hollis remains a donation for use facility. That means we do not have a set fee to use our space. While there are suggestions on our website, how much someone is able to pay should not determine a person's ability to use this space. Hollis is a gift to the community. We encourage people to think of not donating for their stay, but the next person's stay. This "pay-it-forward" world view is a perspective that we want to pass on to all of our guests.

In addition to folks using Hollis for their personal, family, church or business retreat, Hollis has two programs we operate.

First, our Hollis Crossings Day Camp welcomes kids from different zip codes, different schools, different socio-economic groups, different ethnicities different denominations....and each session begins the same with a little bit of wariness and clinging to the groups they start with. However, each session also ends the same ...with laughter, fun and hugs. Through communal experience, good old-fashioned fun, a little dirt and a lot of bug spray...our campers discover that we are all craving the same things...good friends, people to care about us and game of tag every now and then. The things that separate them...fall away and the similarities remain.



Second, Brickworks is an effort to recycle LEGOs into kits for kids in the CASA programs of Jackson and Wyandotte counties. Hollis is a donation center for LEGOs and we have several volunteer events each year where we separate LEGOs or try to reassemble kits for these children. August 3, 10 AM-2 PM, is the next one. Case workers use the kits to give away and have something to do with the child at initial meetings.

Finally, **we need your help.** We want to give away personal or family retreats to the folks you know who have been working tirelessly these past two and half years. It might be a teacher who has spent the last 3 years worrying about students while trying to figure out how to teach remotely or in a mask, while spending their own money to buy school supplies.

Or the healthcare worker, hailed as a hero at the beginning of the pandemic, but as COVID wore on was left to deal with an overwhelming tide of patients who were suffering...in addition to the normal workload of health care? Whoever it might be, you can nominate them for a 24-hour free retreat at Hollis.



This is one way we can partner and walk together as a synod

[Click here to nominate someone](#) or [Click here to donate](#)

You can find out more about Hollis on our website: www.holliscenter.org or give us a call, 913-441-0451

Offering Christian Hospitality in Bonner Springs since 1988

Blessings,

Dave Mareske, Executive Director

Walking Together - Central States Synod, ELCA 2022

From Our Outdoor Ministries - Camp Tomah Shinga



As we get a chance to look back on another great year at Tomah Shinga, it is certainly highlighted by us welcoming back campers after our 2020 season being derailed by COVID. And what a Joy it was to have our space filled with the joy of God's children Exploring Creation, Building Community, and Growing in Faith.

One of the biggest highlights from our camping season this year was that; as we make our way back to a "regular" camping schedule, this summer we were able to make room for two weeks of camp just for kids who are in the foster care system. It was inspiring to see some of the faces light up as they were able to get out of the city for the first time and experience all that comes with the outdoors.

Now that 2021 has wrapped up, we are very much looking forward to our 2022 camping season. This new year will be full of new projects, programming opportunities, and many new ways for all people to be involved in what is happening at Camp Tomah Shinga. A few bigger projects that we will be focusing on ahead of summer camp are: the addition of our Outdoor Education Center, putting on additional High Ropes course elements, and continuing to update our cabins.

We are incredibly thankful for all of those who have supported Camp Tomah Shinga this year and beyond. Together, we will continue to build and outdoor ministry site that is a place of total inclusion for all to have an opportunity to Explore Creation, Build Community, and Grow in Faith.



From Our Education Partners



Lutheran School of Theology

An Educational Ministry of Metro St. Louis Congregations—ELCA

Rev. Stephanie Doeschot, Program Administrator

<https://lststl.org>

Making Meaning—

The Intersections of Faith in Today's World

Throughout 2022, LST's theme centers on the ways our faith helps us to make meaning of the world around us. Especially in times that feel tumultuous and unsettled, we turn again to our scripture and theology that is rooted in God's love and brings about wholeness and life that really is life.

We are guided by questions like: How do we make spiritual and theological meaning of what is happening around us? How do we understand a world that often feels chaotic and unstable? How is God yet at work among us bring restoration and new life?

Our courses are open to all who wish to register. Many also count for continuing education credit or elective credit for PMAs.

Past 2022 Classes:

Understanding the Hebrew Bible, Dr. Fred Niedner, Valparaiso University

Hearing A Good Sermon Rev. Steve Albertin, retired pastor teaching for Crossings

Introduction to Lutheran Worship, Rev. Blake Duncan, CSIS SAM Coordinator

An Evening of Poetry with Christopher Kempf, Dr. Christopher Kempf, University of Illinois

Hope: A Lens For Living Now, and For The Future, Dr. Kristin Largen, Wartburg Theological Seminary



Classes

Fall classes will be publicized soon. Check out <https://lststl.org>. Information on coming classes is also shared occasionally via email announcements. To be added to the email list send a message to administrator@lststl.org.

Lutheran School of Theology

Lutheran School of Theology is grateful to those throughout the synod who have participated in our classes, who have donated to our ministry and have prayed for us as we work toward the mission to which we have been called.

Lutheran School of Theology's current work is built on the foundation of its 27-year history of serving the church. Since Synod Assembly 2021, we completed the commitment made toward illuminating what it means to be the Public Church. Our 2021 classes were as follows:

Care For Creation As A Christian Calling, Dr. Clint McCann, Eden Theological Seminary

"I Was Hungry and You Gave Me Food," Dr. Clint McCann, Eden Theological Seminary

Jesus and the Gospels, Dr. Fred Niedner, Valparaiso University

Stand Your Ground Bible Study Womanist Perspective, Dr Linda Thomas, LSTC

Intersectionality, Dr. Linda Thomas, LSTC

Lutheran Confessions, Dr. Chris Repp, Grace Lutheran Church, Champaign, Illinois

Womanist Biblical Interpretation, Dr. Wil Gafney, Brite Divinity School

Faith, Democracy, and #BlackLivesMatter, Dr. Linda Thomas, LSTC

Themes in the Gospel of Luke, Dr. Eunyoung Lim, LSTC

Scholarships

Scholarships are available. Those who wish to apply may find information and an application on the LST website <https://lststl.org/scholarships-for-lst-classes/>

Lutheran School of Theology St. Louis
*Teachers and life-long learners in theological study together
at a high level of excellence rooted in the Word of God.*

Walking Together - Central States Synod, ELCA 2022



From Our Education Partners

BISHOP KEMPER SCHOOL FOR MINISTRY

Theological Education for All People

www.bishopkemperschool.org (816) 217- 4053

Established in 2013 by the Episcopal Dioceses of Kansas, Nebraska, West Missouri and Western Kansas, the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry provides high quality, innovative and affordable theological and spiritual formation for future priests, deacons and lay leaders. We respond in creative ways to meet the need for strong clergy and lay leaders in rural and under-resourced communities.

In 2015, BKSM established a **partnership** with the ELCA Central States Synod to offer approved coursework for students seeking to serve as Pastoral Ministry Associates. Although just two PMA students have earned certificates at BKSM to-date, several others have taken a portion of their coursework with us. *It is a gift to our largely Episcopal student body to have the perspectives and experiences of our Lutheran siblings among us.*

Since 2014, we have graduated nearly 70 students. This year, we have 39 enrolled in certificate programs and about a dozen who have taken classes for fun. If you are interested in **enrolling in transformative classes in a supportive, Jesus-centered environment to equip you for ministry**, we would love to visit with you.



FORMAT

The academic year begins in mid-July and concludes mid-June. Each course lasts eight weeks.

During the first four weeks, students complete 350-400 pages of assigned reading for their course. Then, students meet in person or on Zoom for the "focus weekend" on the second full weekend of the month.

In-person students gather for focus weekends on the BKSM campus in Topeka, KS, which features three fully mediated classrooms, a library, comfortable sleeping accommodations next door and a beautiful chapel.

Focus weekends include nine hours of direct instruction, along with shared worship, catered meals, and a Saturday evening activity. These gatherings provide multiple touch points for spiritual formation, community building, and deepened relationships.

In addition, there are monthly praxis and colloquium sessions (small group formation) that take place on Zoom.

After the focus weekend, students have four weeks to submit final papers.

While we **strongly encourage** students to attend in person, online options are available. Online students participate in all instruction sessions and worship.

COST

Our motto is *Theological Education for All People*, which means cost should not be a barrier to receive theological education. We strive to keep our per-course tuition as low as possible. The in-person rate includes lodging and four delicious (really!) meals.

- **In-person (for credit)**
\$210 per class
- **Online (for credit)**
\$135 per class
- **Personal enrichment (audit)**
\$100 per class

Students are responsible for the cost of books and travel expenses. Books typically cost \$50-\$75 per month.



FACULTY

Each year, BKSM invites 20-25 well-credentialed and highly experienced faculty members, academics and practitioners alike, to teach our courses.

Our faculty is second-to-none and in some cases larger than traditional residential seminary programs. Without a doubt, every single one of them is deeply committed to the success of our students, both academically and vocationally. Additionally, they are all people of faith and bring that lens to classroom discussions.

We currently have three exceptional Lutheran faculty members on our roster: Dr. Tyler Atkinson, Dr. Arminta Fox and Bishop Emeritus Roger Gustafson.

This year, 14 of 23 instructors hold Ph.D. or D.Min. degrees and 18 are ordained.

Instruction areas/number of faculty members include:

Bible	5
Ethics	3
Theology	6
Spirituality	2
History	2
Diakonia	4
Preaching	2
Practice of Ministry	9
Liturgics	1
Colloquium	3



Walking Together - Central States Synod, ELCA 2022

From Our Education Partners



2022 joint report to synods from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago & Wartburg Theological Seminary

Dear Partners in Ministry in the Central States Synod:

The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC) and Wartburg Theological Seminary (WTS), the two seminaries that the Central States Synod supports, stand united with a vision to form compassionate, ever-evolving leaders for a changing church.

The impact of the pandemic lingers, but both of our schools are thriving, having adapted well to a changing situation. We remain committed to forming leaders for the church who are deeply grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ and well-prepared to accompany congregations and other church-related institutions into more diverse and adaptive ministries.

A few examples of these efforts by LSTC are highlighted below:

- LSTC joyfully began 2022 with the reinauguration of the Pero Center, renamed the Albert “Pete” Pero Jr. and Cheryl Stewart Pero Center for Intersectionality Studies, with Dr. Linda Thomas as the new program director. Also this past year LSTC’s Antiracism Transformation Team was commissioned, and Vima Couvertier-Cruz was appointed director of diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice. Two related strategic plan initiatives were also launched: “Pursuing Equity: Race, Sexuality, Gender” and “Authentic Diversity.”
- With LSTC’s announcement of the \$2 million endowed Damm Chair, we are searching for an effective scholar with a record of inspiring teaching who can help LSTC integrate leadership cultivation into all aspects of our curriculum. This newly established chair was funded by a generous gift from Larry and Christie Tietjen and will help prepare mainly MDiv, MA and MAM students for ministry. It will allow LSTC to reach additional audiences to enhance leadership across the church. The seminary is also underway with the search process for a professor of Lutheran Systematic Theology with an expertise in global Lutheranism.
- Motivated by the need to provide scholarships for our students, LSTC has engaged in multiple fundraising initiatives, the majority of which have been board-directed. We were especially grateful for a \$1 million gift in 2021 that catapulted us into a successful fundraising year.
- As LSTC reached the conclusion of two years offering all courses in a blended format (remote and in person), we are grateful for the generous grant from the In Trust Center for Theological Schools that enabled LSTC to consult with Learning Forte (Learning for Theological Education). The firm helps seminaries and schools of theology upgrade online learning tools. The upshot of this partnership was a transition of all online learning to Brightspace, a state-of-the-art online learning platform.
- The board of directors has also actively engaged its own improvement in shared governance and attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion by active participation in the Wise Stewards program sponsored by In Trust. LSTC was one of ten schools elected for this program.

From Our Education Partners

A few examples of these efforts by WTS are highlighted below:

- WTS received a Phase II Lily Grant for \$725,000 in support of two initiatives that are meant to develop resources for both leaders and congregations that come from diverse backgrounds. The one program is “Journey Together,” a new competency-based TEEM program, which is offered fully in Spanish and English. The second initiative is a re-launch of LSPS, the Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest, which is expected in early July 2022.
- WTS has launched “Lead BOLDLY,” a \$28 million comprehensive campaign built around Scholarships and Innovation as the top priorities. A \$6-7 million remodel of Fritschel Hall, the seminary’s main academic building, is included in the innovation focus. With deep gratitude, they announced that \$20.5 million had already been received from lead donors.
- In December, WTS announced the formation of a new department, the Department for Vocation and Formation, led by Dr. Kris Stache, the Vice President for Leadership formation. This department was created to establish a more integrated network of support for students, from inquiry out into first call, as they are formed for a long career in public ministry.
- WTS called a new Hebrew Bible faculty member, Dr. Beth Elness-Hanson, who will join the faculty in July from her current position in Uppsala, Sweden. In other faculty news, long-time Hebrew Bible professor Ann Frischel will be retiring in July, and long-time dean, Craig Nesson, will be stepping down from the dean’s position at the end of June, but continuing his role as professor of contextual theology and ethics.
- Finally, the theme of the presidential inauguration in November was “Life Together in a New Day.” WTS has continued to live into that identity, grounded in its history but looking forward into the future, responding to the call of the Holy Spirit who is continually doing a new thing in our midst.

Please know that you are welcome at our seminaries at any time, online or in person! Participate in upcoming educational opportunities. Join us for community events. Worship alongside our students in chapel. Bring someone you know with gifts for ministry. Consider rostered ministry in the ELCA. Come create a meaningful connection with the future leaders that you and your synod support through your gifts to Wartburg and LSTC.

Your synod partnership is essential for LSTC and Wartburg to continue our shared mission of providing effective theological education and developing leaders for the many ministries of your congregation, synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We are so grateful for you and our shared collaborations for the sake of the gospel in service of the church and the world. We could not do this work without you! Thank you for your time, thank you for your talents, and thank you for your financial support.

To learn more about your seminaries and the innovative ways that we are forming leaders, please visit www.lstc.edu and www.wartburgseminary.edu.

Yours in Christ,



The Rev. James R. Neiman, Ph.D.
President
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



The Rev. Kristin Johnston Largent, Ph.D.
President
Wartburg Theological Seminary

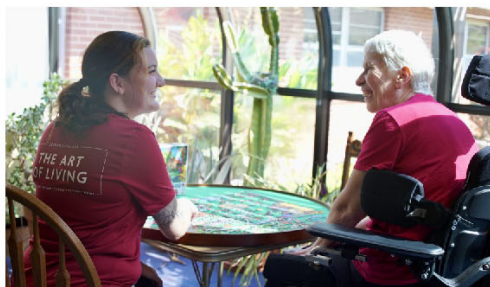
From Our Partners in Ministry - Bethany Village

BETHANY+VILLAGE

THE ART OF LIVING



THE COTTAGES



BETHANY HOME



SUNFLOWER TERRACE

Who is Bethany Village?

Bethany Village (Bethany Home Association) is a not-for-profit continuous care retirement community providing more than 100 years of Christ-centered services and care for the aging and handicapped. Located in Lindsborg, Kansas, the home is a ministry of the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

With origins dating to the early 1900s, Bethany Home takes pride in the rich cultural heritage of Lindsborg and the livelihood and vitality of the Smoky Valley communities. The Kansas Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod endorsed the idea of a home in 1907. Land was purchased and shortly thereafter, construction began on a two-story building that welcomed nine residents in November of 1911. Over the past century, the buildings and facilities have seen major additions, renovations, and expansions. Today, Bethany Village includes The Cottages Independent Living, Sunflower Terrace Assisted Living, and Bethany Home, a skilled nursing/rehabilitation, and long-term care center.

At Bethany Village, we believe seniors should be empowered creatively, spiritually, and emotionally to do what they do best. Where others see challenges, we see potential. Where others see loss or decline, we see opportunity and capacity.

Through tapping into the talents of our residents, the rich arts and cultural life in Lindsborg, and inspiration from our Creator, we engage our community of seniors with creative activities, lifelong learning, and intergenerational opportunities—as well as instill a healthy sense of self-fulfillment, value, and friendship. Whether you're a tinkerer, crafter, gardener, musician, quilter, or simply one who appreciates the world of creativity, Bethany Village's "Art of Living" philosophy helps make the golden years as healthy and dynamic as possible.

How has the COVID pandemic affected Bethany Village?



Bethany Home celebrated the quarantine release of one neighborhood after months of isolation.

The challenges we have faced over the past two years have been overwhelming, but those who live and work in Bethany Village have remained steadfast. Our staff truly love those who live with us and our residents truly love the staff. Each offers support and encouragement to the other, even in the hardest of times. To see someone receiving care lift a caregiver up in prayer and words is truly amazing. As caregivers, staff often feel humbled by our residents' encouragement and are grateful for their ability to answer this calling.

CEO, Kris Erickson noted, "It is almost impossible to describe how incredibly difficult our labors have been. The key to our ongoing survival and success has been the support we have received. The kindness exhibited by our community and family members has sustained and encouraged us all."

In public, life seems to be returning to what we knew before the pandemic, but within our organization we are still in the midst of pandemic related issues. The complexities of our mission are playing out at both the local and national level these days.

How does the future of senior living look?

We, and all senior care providers, continue to face challenging days ahead. As a non-profit mission, we are hard hit by rapid inflation of prices on consumer goods, insufficient funding from Medicare and Medicaid, the national labor challenges, ongoing pandemic expenses, and ever-changing government regulation. The biggest operational concern we face is the continued national staffing shortage. Our staff have been working to make sure our residents receive the care they deserve, but staff recruitment has been challenging.

Fortunately, Bethany Village has over 100 years of success, a determination to succeed, and a devotion to those who reside with us. The industry our mission serves is rapidly changing, and recent federal actions indicate that we are on the precipice of a significant shift in our model of care delivery.

"Bethany Village is blessed with adaptive leaders, quality peer groups, and ties to strong advocacy associations. As I have shared for some time now, Bethany Village will exit the pandemic looking different than it did entering the pandemic. I have faith that we will emerge successfully," said Erickson.

SUNFLOWER TERRACE



It has been an exciting year at Sunflower Terrace! We have completed our expansion and have plenty of room to grow our community. With the renovations to our building, we not only have additional apartments, but a workout room, large community room, and a beautiful courtyard.

Although we continue to work through the limitations and restrictions that COVID has presented to the healthcare industry, we continue to remain COVID free, and are proud to say that we have been able to successfully maintain positive quality of life for the residents that we serve within our community. Sunflower Terrace strives to support independence and truly embraces the Art of Living.

WELCOME HOME LUXURY SENIOR LIVING

You deserve an effortless life rich in friends, culture, and community. One that's more affordable than you imagine.

Together, we'll customize a package to fit the lifestyle you desire. Whether you seek full independence, freedom from cooking, or a little assistance day-to-day, Sunflower Terrace is a place you can feel at home.

**WE OFFER A RANGE OF LIFESTYLE OPTIONS
STARTING AT \$2,054/MONTH**

CONCIERGE SENIOR LIVING (residence & amenities)

EFFORTLESS LIVING (meals, housekeeping, & minimal assistance)

FULL-SERVICE ASSISTED LIVING (includes personalized care)

GET YOUR FREE GUIDE

AND A VOUCHER FOR \$500 OFF FIRST MONTH'S RENT

at SunflowerTerrace.com or by calling **785.227.8331**

**SUNFLOWER
 TERRACE**

BY BETHANY+VILLAGE
LINDSBORG, KANSAS



PUTTING FAITH INTO ACTION

REPORT TO 2022 SYNOD ASSEMBLY CENTRAL STATES SYNOD, ELCA

ADVOCACY

Kansas Impasse Shows Green Energy Opposition Has Lost Steam

ASSOCIATED PRESS, 3/17/22

Faith leaders, educators urge Kan. lawmakers to reject bills undermining Kansas schools

TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL, 2/16/22

Opinion: Parents' Bill of Rights bill disguises moral panic as responsible legislating

KANSAS REFLECTOR, 3/18/22



KIFA's 2022 legislative priorities included: protecting the ability of teachers and schools to “teach the truth” about America’s fraught racial history; eliminating Kansas’ regressive and very high state sales tax on food; removing barriers from food assistance and childcare assistance that were put into place during the Brownback administration; payday loan reform; Medicaid expansion; fair redistricting and protecting the right to vote; and protecting and expanding Kansas’ vibrant renewable energy sector.

We returned to an in-person presence in the capitol. We testified on over a dozen bills – and appreciate those clergy who testified on our behalf. Reb Moti met with legislators throughout the session in support of our priorities or to stop measures we opposed. After Gov. Kelly vetoed several bills, we dedicated our efforts to sustaining those vetoes.

KIFA Advocacy Days (Feb 15-17) were hybrid, with an in-person day that focused on legislative meetings and a “Teach the Truth” rally; and two days of virtual gatherings, featuring legislative meetings, issue-based workshops, a keynote address by Rev. Jacqui Lewis, author of “Fierce Love”, and a closing interfaith vigil.

KIFA has become the newest state affiliate of Interfaith Power & Light – a national network organizing a “religious response to climate change.”

CLIMATE

This gives us access to programming and advocacy actions on a national scale and gives our congregations access to creation-care-related programming.

SPPPO

Reb Moti participates in monthly calls with other ELCA State Public Policy offices, and we work closely with Bishop Candea and Synod staff.

KIFA BY THE NUMBERS

10,000 – Social Media Visits & Reach
3,000 – Faith & Public Policy Forum Reach
2,000 – Supporters & Advocates
1,500 – Legislative Action Alerts Sent
200 – Clergy Leaders
150 – Annual Dinner Guests
120 – Advocacy Days Attendees
60 – Chapter Members
12 – Testimonies in the KS State Legislature
10 – KIFA in the News (interviews & articles)



Throughout the country there have been efforts to limit the teaching of America's true racial history, including how it affects life today, under the banner of "Critical Race Theory." In anticipation of this moral panic coming to Kansas, KIFA took the lead in organizing the "Teach the Truth Coalition", to oppose any efforts to limit the teaching of American history and culture, particularly our troubled racial history. The coalition includes advocacy organizations; community leaders; educators; and clergy. We developed a strategy that focused on legislator outreach and public awareness. Thus far, no "CRT"-related legislation has passed in Kansas.

TEACH THE TRUTH

OUTREACH

Under the leadership of our new digital organizer, Saaliha Khan, we continued developing our monthly supporter and clergy meetings. These are ongoing – please join us!

We held six "Faith and Public Policy" forums last autumn, focusing on our advocacy priorities. This is a signature program for KIFA and we will hold another series this fall. We have resumed travel and in-person outreach. We would love to visit and speak with your community about faith-based advocacy – please reach out!



CONNECT WITH US!

KansasInterfaithAction.org

KANSAS INTERFAITH ACTION
 PO BOX 654
 LAWRENCE, KS 66044
 (913) 232-2336

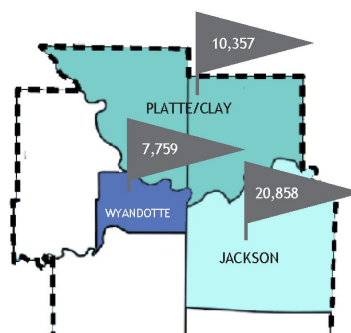


 [KansasInterfaithAction](https://www.facebook.com/KansasInterfaithAction)
 [KansasInterfaithAction](https://www.instagram.com/KansasInterfaithAction)
 [@KS_Interfaith](https://twitter.com/KS_Interfaith) [@KIFA_Climate](https://twitter.com/KIFA_Climate)
 Kifa@KansasInterfaithAction.org

From Our Partners in Ministry - Metro Lutheran Ministries

How You Helped in 2021

METRO
LUTHERAN
MINISTRY



38,974 At-risk and homeless individuals received assistance this year

MLM believes that every person should have a life of dignity and a hope for the future. Poverty makes that right seem like a far-fetched dream for far too many people throughout the metro area. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to drastically exacerbate poverty for other basic needs many Kansas City area families.

For those suffering its effects, poverty presents many impossible choices every day. One participant commented, "If I pay the rent and bills, I have no money for food." Basic needs must be sacrificed for

Thankfully, you have helped stand in the gap for thousands of individuals and families in the greater Kansas City area and helped to diminish their fear, revealing their strength, and restoring their hope.



10,222

Households received food assistance from our pantries in KCMO, KCK, and NKC

945

Households received gifts from the Annual MLM Christmas Store



\$5M

Was provided in emergency rent, mortgage and utility assistance



193

Households received \$101,000 in medical and dental assistance

84



People received financial and employment coaching through the Financial Opportunity Center program



188

Children received back to school supplies and backpacks



5,057

Sack lunches distributed to hungry people who visit MLM



1,970

Breakfast meals served through the Saturday Breakfast Program

309

Seniors received a box of food each month



210

Homeless Households exited homelessness, moving into their own apartments through Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing



76

Homes received weatherization, repairs or wheelchair ramps through the Minor Home Repair program



81

Fruit trees and 36 raised garden beds at the MLM Orchard * Gardens provided free produce to neighbors

1,000

MLM volunteers provided over 10,000 hours of service



From Our Partners in Ministry - Mosaic



To our friends and partners in the **Central States Synod**, where Mosaic provides services out of Coffeyville, Ellsworth, Garden City, Liberal, Kansas City, Pittsburg and Winfield:

Mosaic is a mission-driven, values-led organization. Our mission is to embrace God's call to serve, and our values—belonging, connection, faithfulness and grit—shape how we serve. Throughout our 109-year history, we have helped people who were often seen as outsiders find a place to belong and people to connect with.

In 2022, our services continue to evolve to meet the desires of the people we support, and today, people seek more choices in smaller settings. Our quickly growing “Mosaic at Home” service is a perfect fit to meet those desires, and wherever it is possible, we are expanding this service to help more people.

If you're not familiar with it, our Mosaic at Home program matches someone we support with a contractor who opens their home and their heart to the person in a 24/7 shared living environment. The contractor assists the person as needed to acquire and retain the skills needed for daily living and helps the person participate in the larger community.

Nationally, we now serve more people through Mosaic at Home than in any other way. This service also is grounded in our history—it helps people have a place to belong and others to connect with, but in a more intimate way. It also highlights a longstanding truth: Mosaic is not a place you go but something you're a part of.

Many of our Mosaic at Home contractors are faith-filled people who relish the opportunity to live the call to serve others right in their own home. If you feel you may be called to this type of service, I invite you to contact us about it.

In other exciting news for 2022, Mosaic is nearing the completion of our \$63 million **Called to be Bold** fundraising campaign. We're very close to that target, and I am amazed and humbled by the generosity of the many donors who value the work we do. Those gift dollars help Mosaic expand our services to people and help provide many of the things people we support could not afford on their own.

I know God has a bright future promised for this ministry and the people we serve. As always, I say “Thank you” to the many churches across the nation that partner with us in this important work. Together, we are a positive force for change in today's world.



We are grateful to call you partners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Linda Timmons'.

Linda Timmons, President and CEO, Mosaic



From Our Partners in Ministry - Once We Were Refugees



In early 2021 we were blessed to add a retired home economics teacher to our volunteer staff, a person with extensive experience working in the penal system. She developed an intermediate curriculum which was added to benefit our more skilled beginning graduates. This has been a great boost to those who wish to start home businesses.

The most striking change in recent months has been the introduction of our first clients from Afghanistan. This group's needs seem at first blush to be different from our prior students. The most noticeable difference is that many of these folks have well developed sewing skills, some even carried on businesses out of their homes, making clothing and household items for sale. Their market here is wide open since they are early arrivers and there is no well-established source for Afghani cultural items. Having left home on very short notice and with very few household goods, the greatest need which many confront is gathering the tools they need to begin work in the United States.

We therefore have turned our acquisition efforts in the direction of gathering machines that are adequate to their task, what are called "industrial" machines. These machines are large and strong and not available on the donations market as readily as the domestic machines we have been using to date. We have had some success at locating a few and have been privileged to assist with at least two start-ups, a true joy for us as well!

The near term at the Gathering Table includes the addition of a second teaching room to accommodate our intermediate classes and our industrial machine introductory classes. It is a great blessing to have the added space, the one room had become quite crowded. We would love to welcome any of you to visit on a Tuesday or Thursday between 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM at the Gathering Table—come for the nickel tour!

We are pleased to get to share that as of March, 2022, we have graduated 177 beginning sewing students and 15 intermediate students. A number of these have taken their new skills to work, adding to family prosperity. We continue to place able graduates for full time employment and have seeded at home cottage industries as well!

Thanks to the generosity of our partners we continue to be able to provide, tuition free, nine weeks of beginning lessons. Each student learns to maintain and sew on a machine provided by generous donors. Each receives all of the fabric, thread, and notions needed to accomplish their assignments. Each receives instruction from volunteers who work with them for the love of what they are doing and the people with whom they are gifted to work. And, at graduation, each takes home with them the machine they learned on, a new iron and ironing board, new scissors, notions, and about ten yards of fabric of their choosing—enough to get started sewing at home for their families! All is provided by folks like you who have a heart for helping newcomers to get a start in a whole new environment.

Please know that we will happily welcome anyone who visits to see what we are up to! We conduct our classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM at:

The Gathering Table
5001 Independence Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri

This is on the corner of Independence and Brighton Avenues, across from North East High School.

* * * * *

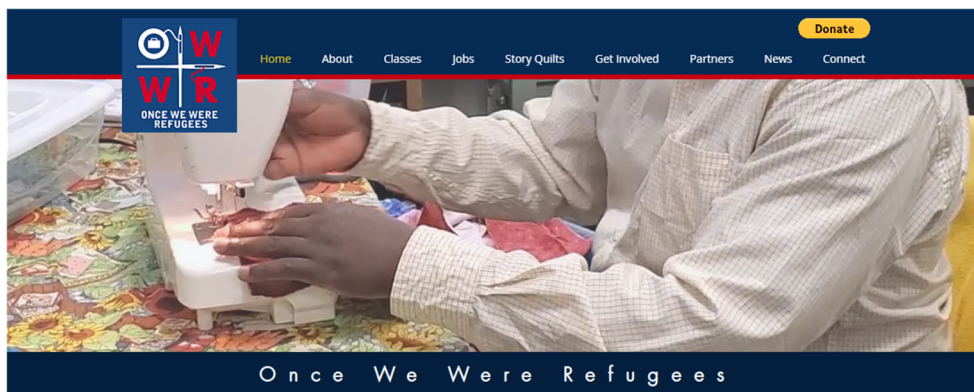
With our return to full activity we will have some needs. **The first, and most urgent, is for volunteers to assist with various tasks, primarily teaching sewing.** We will provide training for any who are interested, so we ask that any who might join that effort please let us know soon.

Material needs are for:

- Fabrics—one yard or larger pieces of anything you have that you don't need
 - Cottons, polys, denims, brocades, knits, upholstery, drapery, and we especially need fleeces
- Yarn—all weights and colors
- Tools
- Notions
- Machines, especially industrial, straight stitch, serger, blind hemmer all needed

Many, many thanks for all that you have done, and all that you will do going forward.

Once We Were Refugees has a rebuilt web site at www.oncewewererefugees.org. We hope you will take a moment to check us out!



Blessings,

Once We Were Refugees' Board of Directors

Rev. William B. Say, Chair, Treasurer

Dayna Kerr, Vice Chair

Nikki Johnson, Secretary

William D. Say, Communications

Ann Say, Director of Education

Ken Heitland PhD, Technical Director



From Our Partners in Ministry - Women of the ELCA



The 33rd annual convention of the Central States Synodical Women's Organization was held virtually in September 2021. With total registration of over 100, those attending made the most of the opportunities afforded us via Zoom. The convention's theme: *My Story, Your Story, Our Story*, provided meaningful opportunities for Bible Study and sharing of personal stories of lives that had surely been changed since the time of our last convention in August of 2019. We were reminded that everyone has a story, that there is value in sharing, and that each story is blessed.

2021-2022 Board of Synodical Organization



Front Row:

Vickie Donnell, President—Messiah, Springfield, MO

Kathy Steinke, Secretary—St. Mark, Clayton, MO

Beth Rockelman—Trinity, Russellville, MO

Back Row:

Rev Dinah Dutta, Board Member—Good Shepherd, Lawrence, KS

Pat Dunavan, Board Member—Our Savior's, Topeka, KS

Janice Gerken, Treasurer—St. Paul, Cole Camp, MO

Kathy Regehr, Board Member—Trinity, McPherson, KS

Jill Duis, Board Member—Good Shepherd, Washington, KS

Loretta Holmes, Board Member—Resurrection, Haysville, KS

We do look a bit 'wilted', don't we? This was taken at the end of a long two-day meeting - our first in-person meeting - in March. It was so good to be together!

Current and on-going activities of the Board and our synodical organization include:

† **Publishing a quarterly newsletter**, *Walking in the Word*. We are thankful to Mary Liby, a member of Grace in Osage City, KS who edits and publishes our primary communication link with congregational units and women across the Synod.

† **Maintaining an active Facebook page and website**. We are grateful to Linda Lockhart, member of Trinity in Kirkwood, MO, and Tim Anderson, in the synod office, for supporting this effort.

† **Participating in activities sponsored by the churchwide organization**. Some recent offerings include:

- *Now is the Time: A Study Guide for ELCA Declaration to People of African Descent*. This webinar explored the study guide that has been developed to wrestle with the meaning of the *Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent* and its accompanying explanation. We hope to offer a virtual study of this document.
- *The Living History of Faith-Filled Women*. This was a Women's History Month series during the month of March. The three sessions explored the extraordinary lives of women who, throughout history, have made significant contributions to biblical interpretation.
- *Pivot, Don't Panic*. This leadership training event included in-depth Bible Study focusing on servant leadership.

† **Awarding of scholarships** to female members of ELCA congregations seeking post-secondary education. This year we are awarding three scholarships of \$500 each to young women from Trinity in Hays, KS, Zion in Beloit, KS, and Resurrection in Haysville, KS.

† **Offering a virtual Bible Study** on discipleship beginning in May 2022 leading up to the annual convention in July.

† **Discovering the status of Women of the ELCA across Central States**. We rejoice with our nearly 70 active congregational units as they return to pre-COVID activities and want to support them in every way possible. With our newly revised constitution now defining and recognizing as an active unit just one or two women in a congregation, we feel a commitment to share this with the remaining congregations. We are reaching out to them.

† **Studying if the structure of our synodical organization** is still working. Since the inception of the organization it has functioned with 19 clusters, composed of units in close geographic location. We believe that functioning clusters are important for joint ministry opportunities, leadership development, networking, and building community. Our recent effort to make contact with clusters reflected only 6 currently planning activities/meetings, a few without leadership and some that have disbanded. This is a priority for the Board.



34th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE CENTRAL STATES SYNODICAL ORGANIZATION

July 22-24, 2022

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
Kansas City—Overland Park

Follow us on  and at [Women of the ELCA](https://www.womenoftheelca.org/) | [Central States Synod \(css-elca.org\)](https://www.centralstatesynod.org/)

Submitted by Vickie Donnell vickiedonnell@yahoo.com 417-839-8862

Walking Together - Central States Synod, ELCA 2022

From Our Partners in Ministry - Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Siblings in Christ of the Central States Synod,

2021 was many things – frustrating, surprising, heartbreaking, and heartening – to name a few. At Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, however, the word we find ourselves using the most is *transformative*.

Like all of you, we found ourselves facing parallel crises: the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, an influx of vulnerable immigrant children at our border, and the devastating refugee crisis in Afghanistan. While it was an incredibly difficult year in many ways, it was also one of the most inspiring in our 83-year history.

People of faith and communities like yours stepped up in ways that we never could have expected to meet this moment and fulfill our Biblical call to welcome the stranger. In the last year alone:

- **100,000 volunteers** signed up to support our refugee and immigrant neighbors
- Supporters provided more than **\$30,000 worth** of essential items like cell phones and gift cards to our Afghan brothers and sisters
- **14,000+ generous donors** opened their hearts to the ministry of welcome
- LIRS welcomed more than **10,500 Afghans** through our nationwide resettlement network
- Our team assisted in reunifying or placing nearly **33,000 children** in loving homes
- We sent nearly **20,000** holiday cards and **1,750+ gifts** to families affected by immigration detention
- LIRS launched several exciting new programs and offices, such as field offices in Northern Virginia and Fargo, ND; the New American Cities economic empowerment program; Mental Health services for refugee children and families, and more.

Our resettlement and immigration services were complemented by our ever-growing slate of annual programs, which offer the public opportunities to **ADAPT**: Act, Donate, Advocate, Pray, and Teach. We invite you to engage with LIRS, as an individual or community, through one of our five key programs:

- [Stand Up Speak Up](#) – Our interfaith advocacy program organized each spring
- [Gather](#) - A cultural education program hosted in the fall
- [Hope for the Holidays™](#) - LIRS' flagship winter program for supporting families impacted by immigration detention
- [EMMAUS Congregational Network](#) - Our network of congregations who receive resources and support from LIRS
- [LIRS Ambassador Network](#) - A community of change-makers from around the US

In 2022, we are deepening our commitment to the work of welcome and believe that together, we can realize Matthew 25:35 in communities across the United States. We are so grateful for your astounding support and look forward to welcoming our newest neighbors alongside you.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Witte".

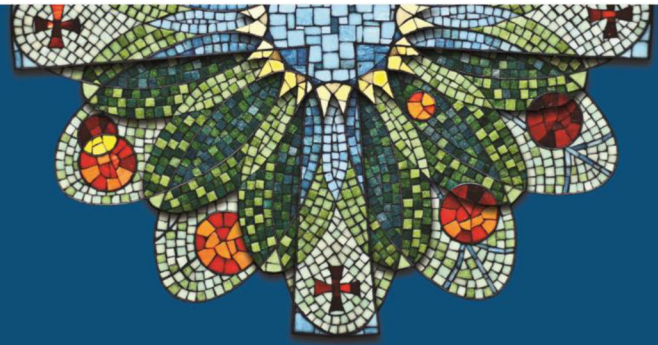
Dr. Kristin Witte, Director for Outreach

National Headquarters: 700 Light Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230 | Phone: 410-230-2700 | Fax: 410-230-2890 | www.LIRS.org
Advocacy Office: 110 Maryland Avenue NE, Suite 506/507, Washington, DC 20002 | Phone: 202-381-1030 | Fax: 202-330-5807

From Our Lutheran Planned Giving Partnership/ELCA Foundation



ELCA Foundation
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



The vision of the ELCA Foundation is to be a thriving ministry that develops a culture of intentional generosity and financial stewardship to expand the work of the ELCA. Our mission is to support and sustain ELCA ministries by enhancing gifting capacity and stewarding resources.

As a ministry of the ELCA, we serve individuals, congregations and worship communities; synods; the Churchwide Organization; and institutions, agencies and other related ELCA organizations.

The ELCA Foundation exists to:

- provide gift planning, administration and processing;
- manage endowment funds and offer investment management services as an acknowledged fiduciary; and
- engage individuals and organizations in thoughtful planning to pass on philanthropic values and support ministry passions.

In 2021, the ELCA Foundation and our network of regional gift planners walked alongside 169 donors/families in developing their gift plans, resulting in \$65.4 million in future planned gift commitments. Over \$12 million in these commitments will go to provide direct support to individual ELCA congregations. The network generated \$107.9 million in total gifts and investment assets. This includes new planned gift commitments, \$14.9 million in current gifts, including funded trusts, gift annuities and individual endowments, and \$57.2 million new assets invested in the Ministry Growth Fund (previously known as Fund A). Thank you for the opportunity to work in your synod, trusting your endowment dollars to the ELCA Foundation, and allowing us to work alongside your ministries.

The ELCA Foundation, and your regional gift planner, are here to support your ministry through shared expertise with endowments, gift acceptance policies and practices, and planned giving. We also work with individual donors to ease the complexity of estate plans, planned gifts, charitable trusts, and non-cash gifts. Our services are free of charge to your congregation and its members. A local representative from our network of regional gift planners is available to work with you. Learn more about the ELCA Foundation by watching "[ELCA Foundation: Make a plan. Change the world](#)" and contact your regional gift planner to help your congregation grow its culture of giving today.

Contact your regional gift planner:

Stephen E. Phelps, MA, CFRE
Stephen.phelps@elca.org
314-703-6949
ELCA.org/Foundation

8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631 • 800-638-3522 • [ELCA.org/foundation](https://elca.org/foundation)



From Our Partners in Ministry - Mission Investment Fund

Mission Investment Fund
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

With faith and finance at our core

The Mission Investment Fund, a financial services ministry of the ELCA, provides a strong, stable, faith-based way for individuals, congregations and ministries to achieve their financial goals.

MIF provides a range of investments for individuals, congregations and ministries. We put those investments to work to fund building and renovation loans for congregations and partner ministries, including social service agencies and outdoor camps.

The result? Impact investments, with a transformative impact on our communities:

Expanded worship spaces ... new space for education and youth ministry ... much-needed day care centers for working families ... industrial-grade kitchens and fellowship halls for community meals.

We were present for our investors and borrowers that needed assistance during the pandemic. We collaborated with our ministry partner, the ELCA Federal Credit Union, to offer expedited loans for congregations, ministries and individuals, as well as 360 Paycheck Protection Program loans totaling \$13.9 million. The PPP loans helped continue payroll for some 2,100 congregation and ministry employees and continued in-person and virtual worship and ministry services for more than 95,000 church members throughout 2020 and 2021.



MIF has a longstanding tradition of strength and stability. At year-end 2021, MIF had 820 loans outstanding, totaling \$575.4 million. Investment obligations totaled \$575.4 million. With total assets of \$822.0 million and net assets of \$226.4 million at year-end 2021, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 27.5 percent-positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.

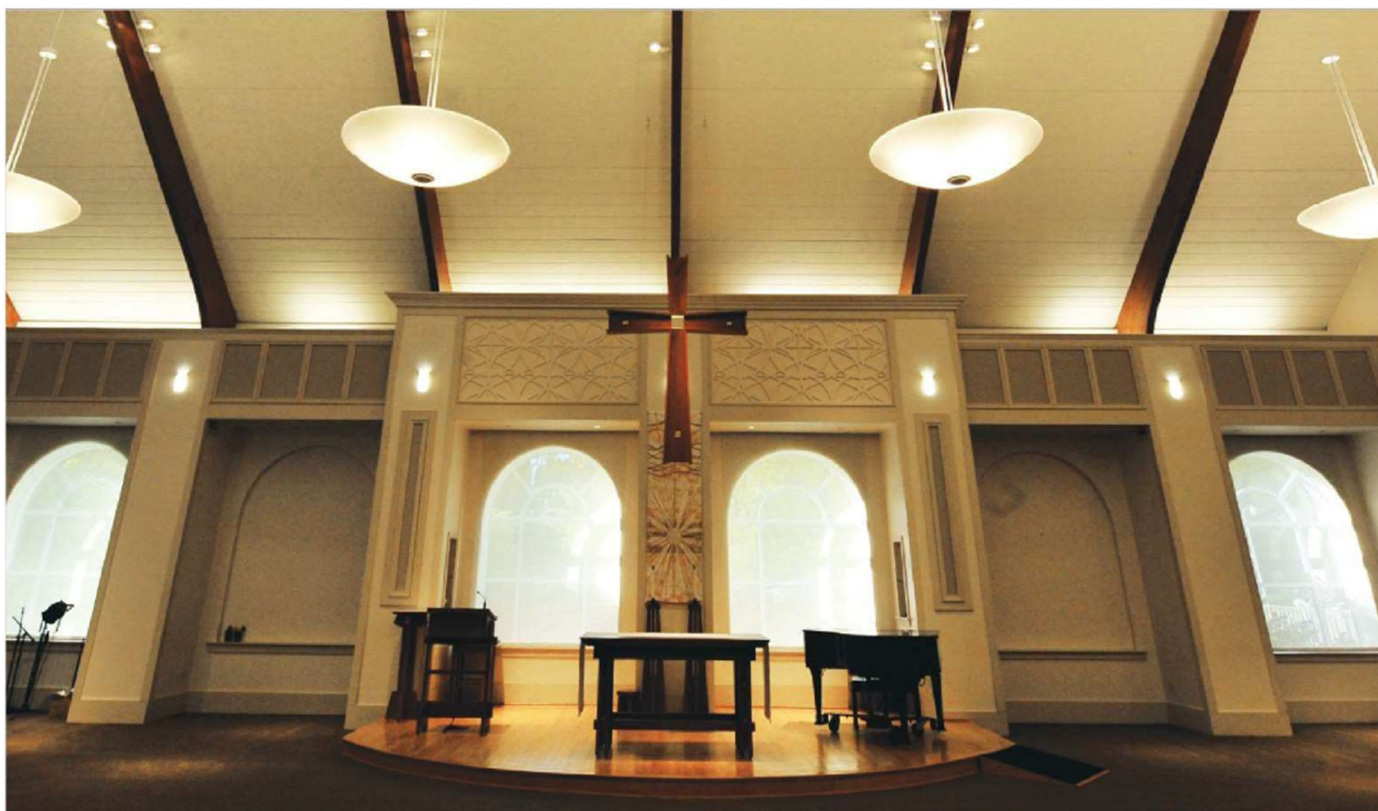
Our steadfast support continues for the members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA and the many ways you minister to a world in need. We are honored to walk alongside you as a trusted partner.

MIF at work in the Central States Synod (as of December 31, 2021):

- 16 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$7,018,425
- \$11,057,231 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations



Mission Investment Fund
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



The Mission Investment Fund can be your financial resource and partner of choice.

Why MIF?

MIF has demonstrated expertise in church and ministry financing. As a ministry of the ELCA with longstanding experience in congregation and ministry building projects, we're unique among lending institutions. We're prepared to listen to what you need, we understand your requirements, and we'll serve as your strategic partner.

We offer competitive rates and terms. MIF consistently offers competitive rates. And now, interest rates on loans remain at historic lows.

We offer a full suite of financial services. In addition to loans, MIF offers congregations, ministries and individuals a host of investment options. Our financial ministry partner, the ELCA Federal Credit Union, offers an additional array of financial services.

The faithful stewardship of Lutheran congregations and their members funds our loans. We use the money invested in MIF to finance hundreds of capital projects across the church.

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, mif.elca.org or contact your Regional Manager the Rev. Janice Kibler: 773-326-7856 janice.kibler@elca.org

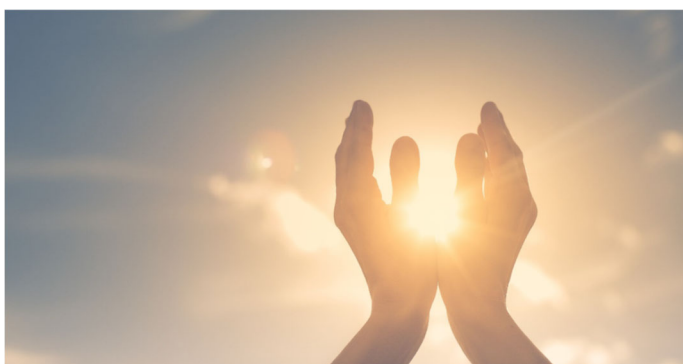
From Our Partners in Ministry - ELCA Federal Credit Union



ELCA Federal Credit Union
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Providing a full array of financial services to ELCA members, congregations and ministries

The ELCA Federal Credit Union, founded in 2016, provides a full suite of financial products and services to members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA. We are the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer loans to individuals. The Credit Union offers a rich variety of products—from savings and checking accounts and CDs ... to loans, lines of credit and credit cards. We serve ministries with deposit accounts, a flexible credit card program, auto loans and unsecured ministry loans up to \$100,000 for small projects such as building repair and purchases. Our strong online presence allows members to access their funds anytime, anywhere—as consumers expect today.



Why choose the ELCA Federal Credit Union?

“To use and share what God has given for the sake of all.”

The ELCA Federal Credit Union supports the ELCA's mission of good stewardship. We provide full services to all ELCA members, congregations and related ministries.

Our mission is to offer the most competitively priced products and services. Because we exist solely to serve our members, we can offer better rates and lower fees than many traditional banks. We have demonstrated success in providing significant savings to our borrowers.

With the church as our sponsor, we operate in ways that are consistent with the church's values. We offer a socially responsible way to do your banking.

ELCA Federal Credit Union | 8765 West Higgins Road | Chicago, Illinois 60631 | Tel: 877-715-1111 | Web: elcafcu.org



ELCA Federal Credit Union
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Throughout the past year, we continued to serve the church and its members.

The Paycheck Protection Program drew to a close in 2021. With assistance from the Mission Investment Fund, we provided loans in 2020 and 2021 to ELCA congregations and ministries that required financial assistance during the pandemic. Covering payroll and operating expenses, these PPP loans proved to be a lifeline to a number of congregations and ministries in need. The loans were particularly meaningful to smaller congregations that didn't qualify for loans from local or national banks. Over the course of the full PPP program, the ELCA FCU provided a total of **360 loans totaling \$13.9 million.** These loans **helped continue payroll for some 2,100 congregation and ministry employees** and continued in-person and virtual worship and ministry services for more than 95,000 church members throughout 2020 and 2021.

In 2021, we ushered in the third cohort of participants in the ELCA's Resourceful Servants program, designed to improve financial wellness and assist rostered leaders in building emergency savings funds. In this matching program, ELCA rostered leaders make ongoing deposits to their Credit Union emergency savings accounts, and our partner MIF matches those funds up to an established amount. Together, we already have served more than **645 rostered ministers** who, collectively, have made emergency savings deposits of more than \$1 million.

Membership is open to every ELCA member, synod, congregation and ministry—and their employees.

For more information about the products and services of the ELCA Federal Credit Union, please visit our website, elcafcu.org or call us at toll free at 877-715-1111.

From Our Partners in Ministry - Portico

Benefit Stability in Uncertain Times

PORTICO®

Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA

As the pandemic ebbed and flowed in 2021, Portico's benefits remained a reliable constant for ELCA congregations and organizations, affirming the importance of church together.

- ELCA-Primary health benefits helped to lower stress levels and provided virtual access to health care.
- The ELCA Retirement Plan continued to deliver strong investment returns while offering no- or low-cost access to financial planning and coaching services.

In recent years, we've brought added stability to our program by extending quality, cost-effective benefits to more of those who serve. As we include more ELCA-affiliated social ministry organizations, colleges, and universities, as well as full communion partner denominations, we grow the size of our pool, which, in turn, allows us to secure lower administrative fees and innovative benefits not typically available to smaller groups. In this way, we continue our mission to serve those who serve.



The Rev. Jeff Thiemann
President & CEO

Meeting the Need in 2021

869

Plays of New Portico Podcast

Hosted by an ELCA pastor on current issues impacting our faith community.

34%

Chose New Voluntary Benefit

Through our cost-saving vision care services provider.

643

Retired

In Portico's bundled benefits program — Well done, good and faithful servants!

7.3%

Annuity Payment Increase

Approved for ELCA annuitants in 2022.

2,564

Medical Visits via Text

Through 98point6®, our virtual primary health care service.

8

Large Organizations Joined

In 2021 — 1 ELCA college, 6 ELCA-affiliated social ministries, and 1 full communion partner social ministry.

2,880

Classes Completed in 2021

On Burnalong, Portico's new online fitness and wellness benefit.

76%

More Accessed Financial Coaching

Through LSS of Minnesota in 2021 than during the same period in 2020.

87.8%

Very Satisfied

With our Customer Care Center service.