

Grateful...Thankful...Blessed

Made Whole by Faith

Fall must be the most glorious season with its beautiful array of colors across the hillsides, the shorter daylight hours, and the harvest coming into full swing. It is also one of the busiest of seasons with fall bazaars, Oktoberfests, football games, yard decorations, and preparations needed before the colder temperatures arrive. All this busyness ushers in Thanksgiving. A day, traditionally set aside, for gathering with family and friends to share in a meal with all the trimmings, filled with conversation and, of course, football. But do we truly pause and observe as a day of thankfulness or does giving thanks get lost in the busyness of the day?

Last month, the Gospel reading for the 18th Sunday of Pentecost was Jesus's encounter with 'The Ten Lepers', which has become a model of giving thanks for God's grace and mercy. Due to their disease, the lepers were driven from their homes and villages as outcasts of society. As Jesus approaches the ten, they call out not for healing, but for mercy (or pity). Jesus, in his compassion, simply tells them to "Go and show yourselves to the priests" and as they went they realized they were made clean.

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Autumn on the Benton County Prairie

However, one of the lepers, realizing he was made clean, turned back and praised God. Seeing Jesus, he fell down before him and thanked him. This man was a Samaritan, who belonged to a society of people highly despised by the Jews, an outsider. It was this Samaritan, this foreigner, who returns and gives thanks. Jesus then commends him both for his faith and his thankfulness. This Samaritan was not only made clean, but his faith made him whole and he was given an even greater gift—salvation. He was healed, saved, and made whole!

As women empowered by the Holy Spirt, will we be like the nine and go on our merry way or will we be like the Samaritan and pause and give thanks for all our many blessings? Jesus's response to the Samaritan tells us that God's gifts are inclusive—for all. When we cry out to God, he is filled with compassion, reaches out and responds to our cries. May Jesus tell each of us as he told the Samaritan: "...your faith has made you well".

Wishes for a blest Thanksgiving!

Submitted by Janice Gerken, Board Secretary

President's Message



The year is going by too fast! Seems we were just together at the Hilton Garden Inn for a spirit-filled weekend where our vessels were filled with God's grace. Now we are getting ready for Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas!

Many units celebrate

Thankoffering Sunday. This is a time for units to bring thankofferings to the altar for all the blessings that God has bestowed during the year. If your unit does not have a Thankoffering celebration and is interested, there is a service available at [2025-WELCA-Thankoffering-Service.pdf](#).

We are thankful for the travelers who will be going to the Kotte District of Papua New Guinea to represent Central States Synod Women of the ELCA at the 60th anniversary celebration of the ELC-Kotte District Women's Program. Please see the article about the ladies who will attend this life-changing event.

We are thankful for our Triennial Gatherings. The event will be held in Des Moines from July 16-19, 2026. The theme is *I am Worthy*. I hear from across our synod that the excitement is building for this event. If you have not already made plans to attend, please do so now! Read more about the gathering in this issue, where you will also find the Barbara Nelson Triennial Gathering Memorial Scholarship application.

We are thankful for the many ladies across our synod who tirelessly work on quilts and kits for Lutheran World Relief. Don't miss the pictures and the summary of the successful ingatherings.

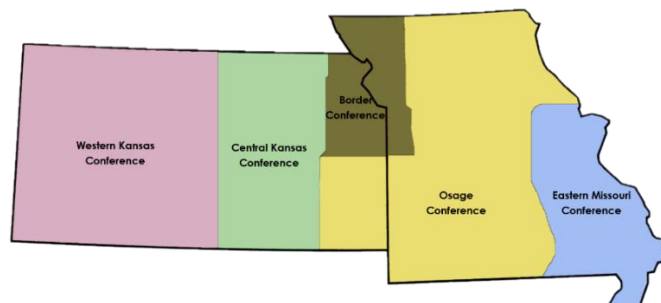
We are thankful for cluster meetings and the coordinators who plan them. We look forward to our 2026 events. We are looking for coordinators, please prayerfully consider saying "yes" to the call.

We are thankful for our Churchwide Board and staff. There are several articles with news from churchwide.

We are thankful for you! The Board is here for you. Please contact us with any questions or comments. Our contact information is in this issue.

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, Board President

Cluster News



With 2026 fast approaching, attention has turned to the upcoming year's cluster events. Cluster coordinators are beginning to plan these events!

We are thankful for the dedicated women who have served as coordinators in the past. We appreciate all who are continuing to serve and for those who have stepped up and said "yes" when asked to serve.

The Board strives to have three coordinators for each cluster. Below are the current coordinators. Please note that there are opportunities to serve.

- Western Kansas Cluster—Kara Jecha—need two additional
- Central Kansas Cluster—Kathy Regehr—need two additional
- Border Cluster—Carol Bunge, Pat Dunavan, Sarah Dunning
- Osage Cluster—Mick Friberg, Becky Verslues—need one additional
- Eastern Missouri—Nancy Berry, Eunice Halverson, Julie Weber

Please consider this opportunity for you to serve. If you have any questions about the role of coordinator contact Gaye Mizell at lovetoknit50@gmail.com or 314-606-9567.

Submitted by Gaye Mizell, Board Member

Save the Date 2026 Cluster Events

Border Cluster

April 18, 2026--Our Savior's Lutheran in Topeka, KS.

Eastern Missouri Cluster

April 25, 2026—Good Shepherd Lutheran, Manchester, MO

Western Kansas Cluster

TBD—Trinity Lutheran, Hays, KS

Triennial Gathering

2026 WOMEN OF THE ELCA GATHERING



july 16-19, 2026 ✝ des moines, iowa

Our hope is that you are making plans to join other Lutheran women at the 2026 Triennial Gathering in Des Moines, Iowa, July 16-19. It will be held at the Iowa Event Center Des Moines Convention Center.

The theme is: *I am Worthy* based on Psalm 139: 14

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"

By repeating the phrase, "I am worthy" we can recognize the Holy Spirit's ongoing work in our lives. It will be a packed informative agenda with inspiring worship experiences.

Click [New Triennial Event Page - Women of the ELCA](#) for registration and preview of the agenda for the Gathering. Be watching this web address as more information will be forthcoming about gathering activities. Registration until January 5, 2026 is \$475. Beginning on January 6th, the fee increases to \$525.

You will be blest by attending this event. Give it prayerful consideration and share your interest with others.

Barbara Nelson Triennial Gathering Memorial Scholarship

Will you consider attending the 2026 Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering in Des Moines, Iowa, July 16-19, 2026? Please be aware that financial assistance may be available to help with the cost. The Barbara Nelson Triennial Gathering Memorial Scholarship was established in 1994 to provide scholarships for qualifying applicants to attend the gathering. The qualifications are listed on the scholarship application available in this issue of *Walking in the Word*. Please note that applications must be postmarked no later than November 30, 2025.

In Loving Memory of Ruth Hanshaw



Ruth Hanshaw, long-time member of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Atchison, Kansas, and a sister in Christ passed on September 28, 2025. She had served as cluster coordinator in the Border Cluster. She shared her many gifts by making sure that the tables were beautifully decorated. Her celebration of life service was held on October 5, at St. Mark with Pastor Dinah Dutta officiating. She leaves her son plus her St. Mark family, along with all of her sisters in Christ, the Women of the ELCA.

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, Board President

News from Churchwide



Many of you heard Jennifer Armstrong-Schaefer, treasurer of the Churchwide Organization, speak at our convention in June. She reported on the joy of the upcoming Triennial Gathering; however, a sobering portion of her presentation was the fact that Women of the ELCA had incurred a \$1 million dollar debt after the 2023 Convention and Gathering in Phoenix. Thankfully the Churchwide Board, under the leadership of Jennifer Hockenbery, interim executive director, were able to garner a loan from the ELCA. Many have asked how could this happen and what is the status of the loan? In conversation with Jennifer Hockenbery she explained that there were fewer attendees than expected resulting in a penalty charged by the hotel and expenses exceeded what was budgeted for the event. It is the goal of the Churchwide Board to have the funds owed to the ELCA entirely repaid in 2025.

If you have explored registration for the 2026 Gathering you found that the early bird registration fee is \$475. Many of you have asked for an explanation for the price increase in comparison to previous gatherings. In conversation with Interim Director Hockenbery on October 2, she stated "Unfortunately, in years past the cost of registration did not meet the cost of the gathering. This has resulted in deficit spending at every single Triennial Gathering which has slowly drained the Women of the ELCA's reserve fund. In addition, there has been a great deal of inflation in the past few years in regard to costs associated with the gathering. This year, because we are still paying off the debt from the 2023 Gathering, we know we need to make the gathering registration cover the cost. This means that the expenses have to be covered by revenue. The registration cost is as low as we can go in order to meet expenses for an anticipated gathering of 1000-1500 women. This includes the costs, exhibition services, registration services, AV, and technology as well as speakers and musicians."

Hopefully this answers questions that some have asked. We value transparency and felt it important to ask questions and then share our findings with each of you.

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, Board President

Update on Katie's Fund

There has been a lot of conversation about Katie's Fund since the campaign began in 2022 with a goal to raise \$1 million dollars. The monetary goal was not met, but there was \$650,000 raised through donations, pledges, and planned gifts from primarily the women who make up Women of the ELCA.

You can still contribute to Katie's Fund thru donations in honor of a loved one, through planned giving, by putting Katie's Fund in your estate plan, or just because you want to honor Katharina von Bora.



Please keep in mind that grants are available from Katie's Fund. These grants, in the amount of \$500 to \$5000, are allocated to support programs, resources, and opportunities in the areas of leadership development, global sharing, and living theology. Go to [WELCA](https://www.welca.org) for the application.

Submitted by Rhonda Templing, Board Member

Please Note

Beginning with the next issue of *Walking in the Word*, Joyce Uber will become the contact for this newsletter. Please enter her contact information in your computer so you will continue to receive this publication. The email address that will be used for distribution is Joyceuber328@yahoo.com.

Shake a Little S.A.L.T on Your Offerings



WOMEN OF THE
ELCA

We are encouraging all ladies of Central States Women of the ELCA to *Share Abundance, Love and Thanks* (S.A.L.T.). The theme of this churchwide appeal comes from Leviticus 2: 13:

"All your grain offerings you shall season with salt; you shall not omit from your grain offerings the salt of the covenant with your God: with all your offerings you shall offer salt." (NRSVUE)

This verse from Leviticus gives instructions on how to season grain offerings made to God—and gives us an important message. We are not just called to give our 'first fruits', but to offer them with seasoning.

The Churchwide Organization experienced a deficit in 2024 and has a projected deficit in 2025 due to decreased contributions. They are making cuts to the

2025 and 2026 budgets and need \$250,000 to make up the deficit. The 'little extra' S.A.L.T. will help pay their day to day operations (i.e., staff salaries and benefits, rent, postage, IT, web communications, insurance, travel costs, accounting) that provide for the ministries that we use on a daily basis (e.g., *Gather*, *Bold Café*, *Bold Connections*, global ministries, scholarships, grants, etc.) possible.

Please consider adding some S.A.L.T to your unit offerings or make an individual donation. There is a bold match for the S.A.L.T. appeal! A member of the churchwide executive board has graciously offered a \$50,000 match for the appeal. Every dollar you donate will be matched up to \$50,000. Deadline for the appeal is January 31, 2026.

Units, please make your checks out to CSS Women of the ELCA and mark 'S.A.L.T.' in the memo line and mail to Janice Gerken at 36282 Renken Road, Mora, MO 65345.

Individuals, please send checks made out to Women of the ELCA with 'S.A.L.T.' in the memo line and mail to Women of the ELCA Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

Let's all shake a little S.A.L.T.!

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, Board President

Visiting Papua New Guinea

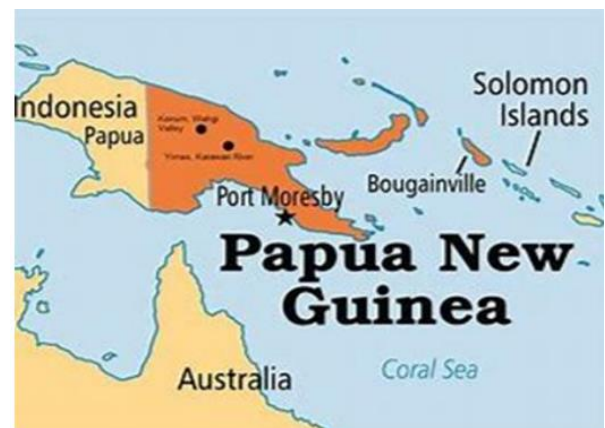
The Central States Synod has two companion synods. One of those is the Kotte District of Papua New Guinea. The country of Papua New Guinea is a sovereign country located in the southwestern Pacific, north of Australia, and includes the eastern half of the island of New Guinea and its surrounding islands.

We received an invitation for representatives from our synodical organization to attend the 60th anniversary celebration of the ELC-Kotte District Women's Ministry. Four individuals will represent the Central States Women of the ELCA at this celebration. Their adventure began on November 11th, returning on the 24th. Pray for their safety and good health as they travel. We look forward to hearing about their experiences upon their return.

Our synodical organization has been generous with contributions to support this trip, contributing \$3,000 and congregational units and individuals contributing \$1,124.25. God is good!

Meet the women making the trip on the following page.

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, Board President



Representatives to Papua New Guinea

**Representatives to Kotte
District of Papua New Guinea**

**Julie Carson, Rev. Janice Hawley,
Rev Gary Teske, Rev Jennifer Jackson
(L to R)**



This photo of the representatives to Papua New Guinea was captured just prior to their boarding at DFW airport, beginning flights eventually arriving in Brisbane and on to Carins, Australia. From there, it's a flight into Papau New Guinea followed by a quite long and tedious trip by boat to the Kotte region. The excitement in their smiles is certainly contagious.

Julie Carson is a retiree that belongs to Grace Evangelical Lutheran in Osage City, KS. She enjoys the outdoors and traveling and has volunteered with Habitat for Humanity. With a recent move to Wichita, KS she has begun attending Resurrection Lutheran in Haysville and is seeking new volunteer options in the area.

Rev. Janice Hawley has served as a mission developer and pastor for a new mission start in Spring Hill, KS and then as pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran in Creve Coeur, MO. After retiring from pastoral ministry in 2024 she relocated to Lawrence, KS where she continues to serve through ELCA Coaching Ministry, Wartburg Theological Seminary's Competency-based TEEM Program as coach and mentor, and providing pulpit supply for area congregations.

Rev. Gary Teske began his ministry as a missionary in Papua New Guinea. He has served congregations in Indianapolis and Great Bend and Lawrence, KS before retiring in 2013. He lives in Topeka, KS and has served on the Companion Synod Team since the mid-90s. Having lived in Papua New Guinea and visited on numerous occasions, Gary is serving as a guide and resource to the WELCA delegation.

Rev. Jenny Jackson has served as pastor at First Lutheran in Topeka, KS since 2013. With her husband, Austin, they parent three sons. Thus, they lead a busy life with school activities and their pets. She values the gift of the global church and is eager to explore and learn from the people in Papua New Guinea.

We are grateful for each of these women for their willingness to make this trip to represent our synodical organization in the Kotte District and to Rev Teske for serving as resource. It will be a blessing to hear of their experiences.

2025 Lutheran World Relief Ingatherings

As this issue of *Walking in the Word* is coming together, the people of Jamaica are suffering terribly in the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa. Again this year, women across the Central States Synod have worked tirelessly making quilts and assembling personal care, baby care, school, and fabric kits. This good work was forwarded to Lutheran World Relief via six most successful ingatherings held across the synod to be shared with many throughout the world.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd Hazelwood, MO 18 churches 751 quilts, 362 personal care kits, 395 school kits, 5 baby care kits, 28 fabric kits	Our Savior's Lutheran Church Jefferson City, MO 12 churches 682 quilts, 594 personal care kits, 432 school kits, 134 baby care kits, 14 fabric kits \$3,333.20 for shipping costs
St. John Lutheran Church Pittsburg, KS 3 churches 196 quilts, 8 personal care kits, 8 fabric kits	Christ Lutheran Church Wichita, KS 9 churches 406 quilts, 789 personal care kits, 354 school kits, 4 sewing kits
St. John Lutheran Church Salina, KS 20 churches 1,330 quilts, 362 personal care kits, 712 personal care kits, 1,342 school kits, 400 baby care kits, 23 fabric kits	Trinity Lutheran Church Hays, KS 12 churches 3, 711 pounds of donations including quilts, personal care kits, school kits, baby care kits, and sewing kits

Now we pray.....

Good and gracious God,

for those who cut fabric and batting and tied knots...we are thankful,
 for those who shopped for and donated the thousands of 'pieces'...we are thankful,
 for those who assembled the kits...we are thankful,
 for those who boxed and labeled the quilts and kits...we are thankful,
 for those who loaded and transported the boxes to the ingathering sites...we are thankful,
 for those assisting at the ingathering sites to load the trucks...we are thankful, and
 for the hours of fellowship shared while quilting and assembling...we are thankful.

Now, we ask that you go with these quilts and kits as they reflect the love and shine the light of Christ, offering hope where and when it is needed most. We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reflecting the Love and Shining the Light of Christ



Awaiting their blessing
(L) St. John Lutheran, Pittsburg, KS
(below) Our Savior's Lutheran, Topeka,



Got them loaded—now on to the ingathering site
(L) Walsburg Lutheran, Leonardville, KS
(below) Messiah Lutheran, Springfield, MO



Ingathering Site
(L) Trinity Lutheran, Hays, KS

Reflecting the Love and Shining the Light of Christ, cont.



Ingathering Site
Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Hazelwood, MO



Ingathering Site
Our Savior's Lutheran, Jefferson City, MO

CENTRAL STATE SYNODICAL ORGANIZATION WOMEN OF THE ELCA

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Board Member:

Vacant Position

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Osage Cluster

Keep up to date with news from Central States Synodical Organization of Women of the ELCA
Subscriptions to this newsletter, *Walking in the Word*, are free of charge and available via USPS or e-mail. Please notify Vickie Donnell at the contacts above.

Our Mission

Mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ.

Our Purpose

As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world.

BARBARA NELSON TRIENNIAL GATHERING

MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

† Must be a member of an ELCA congregation in the Central States Synod

† Must never have received a Barbara Nelson Scholarship

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Phone Number_____ E-Mail Address_____

Congregation_____ City_____ State_____

On the back of this application write a paragraph of approximately 50 words stating why you would like to attend the 2026 Triennial Gathering planned for July 16-19, 2026

This scholarship fund was established for scholarships for Central States Synodical Women to attend a Triennial Gathering. Distribution is made in years there is a Triennial Gathering. The amount of funds available for distribution is calculated as follows:

- † The interest accrued during the 3 fiscal years prior to a Gathering
- † 50% of the monies contributed during the 3 fiscal years prior to a Gathering
- † Scholarships will be awarded according to monies available
- † Only one scholarship will be awarded per congregation

Recipients will be selected by the Executive Committee of the Central States Synodical Women's Organization Women of the ELCA. Notification will be done in a timely manner following the application deadline.

Applications must be postmarked by November 30, 2025

Send Completed Application to: Rita Nelson
Board Member, Synodical Women's Organization
12895 L K & W Road
Leonardville, KS 66449