

2018 Youth Gathering



Lutheran youth from across the United States have been gathering in some form for well over a century. Many adults recall their gathering experience as transformative in the life of their faith, sharing memories of impactful speakers, new relationships, and so much more. The ELCA has continued this rich tradition from its predecessor bodies since 1988.

Every three years, 30,000 high school youth and their adult leaders from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gather for a week of faith formation known as the ELCA Youth Gathering. Through days spent

in interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service and fellowship, young people grow in faith and are challenged and inspired to live their faith in their daily lives.

An important part of the Gathering's ministry are the two pre-events: the Multicultural Youth Leadership Event (MYLE)—a faith formation and leadership development event primarily for youth of color; and the tAble—a gathering that gathers, blesses and empowers youth with disabilities.

June 27 - July 1, 2018 we will gather in Houston for the ELCA Youth Gathering!

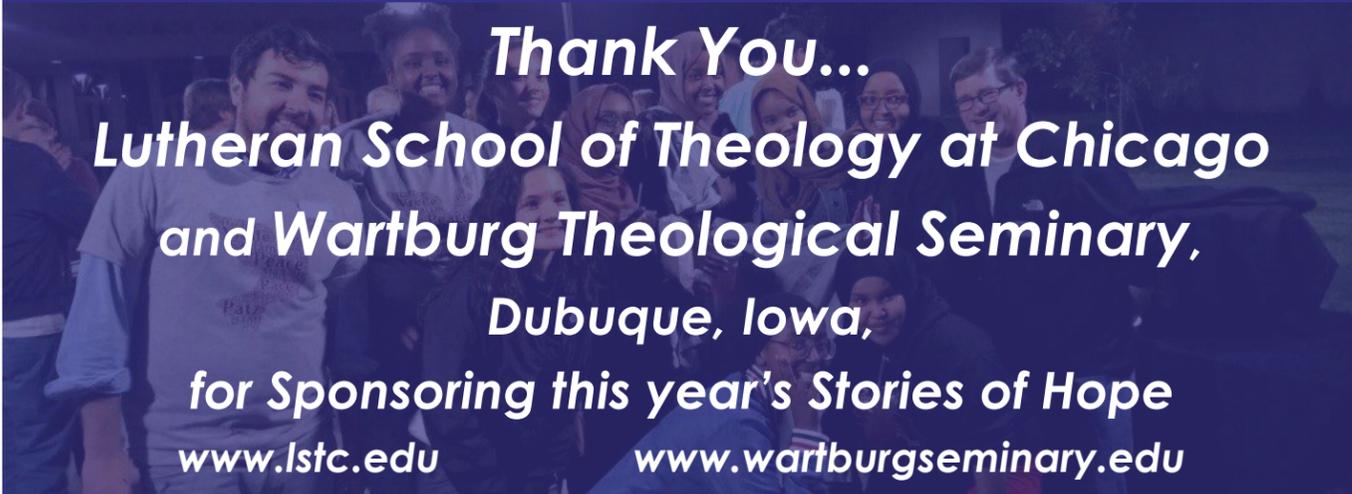
As young people desire and struggle to find someone to become, somewhere to belong and something to do, the Gathering seeks to be a ministry that helps define some of that or at least open up pathways of discovery. Ultimately, we want youth to understand the fierce love that God has for them, just as they are, and that by grace, through faith, they have been saved. When young people (or really any age person!) truly claim this reality, it indeed changes everything.



STAY CONNECTED! • www.elca.org/gathering • www.facebook.com/youthgathering • www.twitter.com/elcagathering

• www.instagram.com/elcagathering • www.facebook.com/csselcayouthgathering

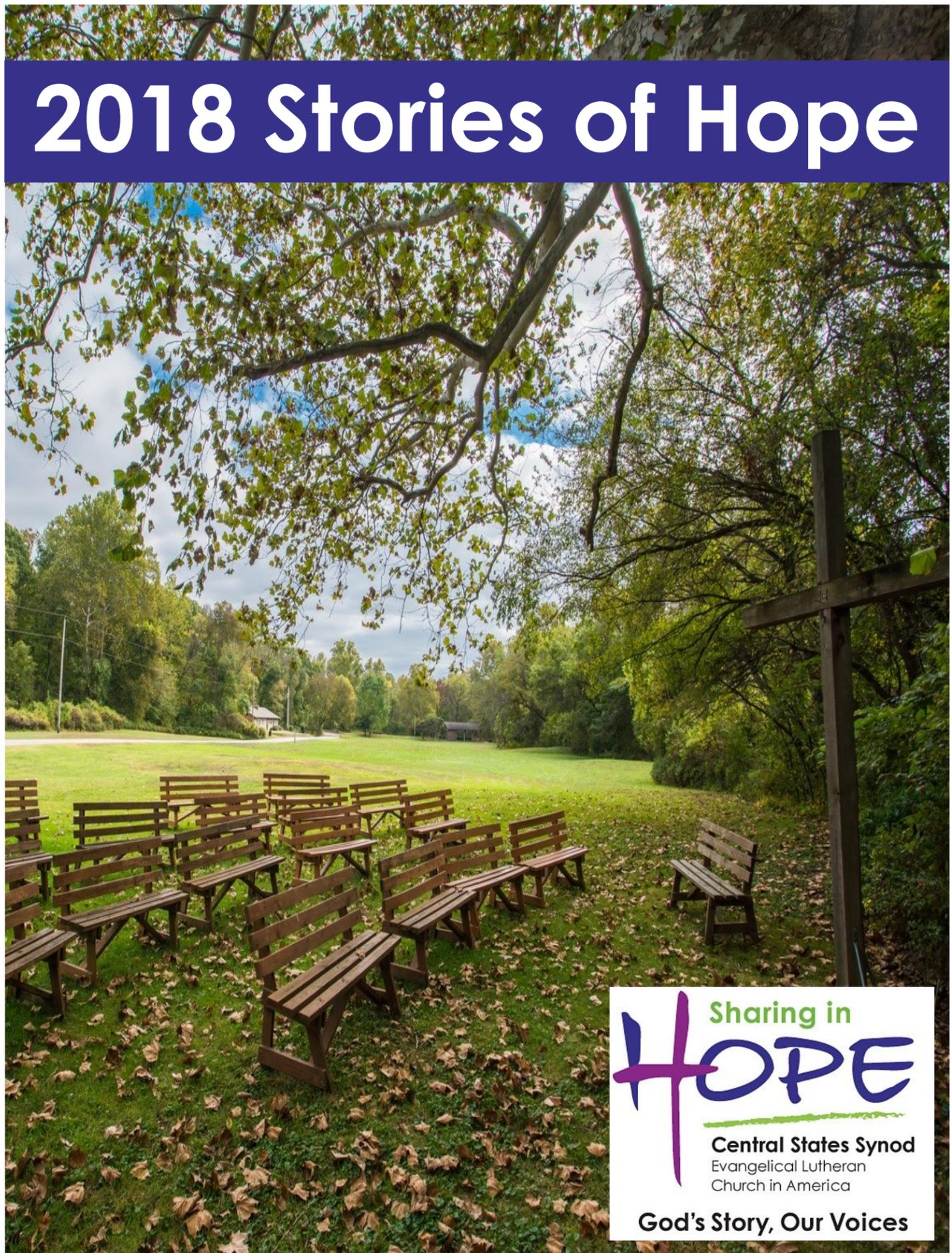
Mindy Tillberg, Central States Synod Coordinator; mindy@immanuelosalina.org or 785-825-4750



Thank You...
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
and Wartburg Theological Seminary,
Dubuque, Iowa,
for Sponsoring this year's Stories of Hope
www.lstc.edu www.wartburgseminary.edu



And Thank You St. James Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO
for printing these Stories of Hope



From Our Bishop Roger Gustafson



Sharing in Hope – What we have to share is the best news this world has ever known: God has given each one of us a new birth into a living hope through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That’s a story worth sharing!

I hope you take a few minutes to sample these Stories of Hope from your sisters and brothers in the Central States Synod and savor the hope that flows through them. May they bless your journey of faith!

Peace and joy,

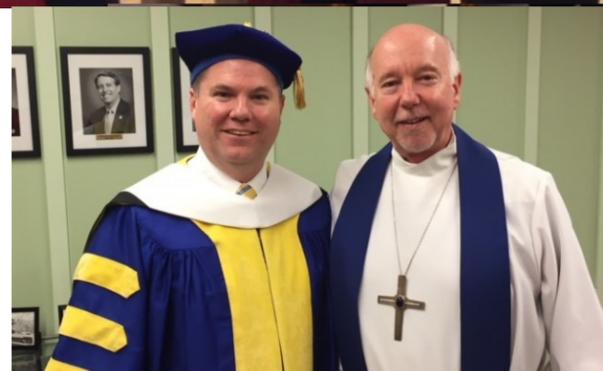
Roger Gustafson, Bishop
Central States Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Compartiendo en Esperanza - Lo que tenemos para compartir es la mejor noticia que el mundo jamás ha conocido: Dios ha dado a cada uno de nosotros un nacimiento nuevo en una esperanza viva por la vida, muerte, y resurrección de Jesús. ¡Vale la pena compartir esta historia!

Espero que usted tome unos pocos minutos para repasar estas Historias de Esperanza de sus hermanas y hermanos en el Sínodo de los Estados Centrales y saborear la esperanza que fluye por ellas. ¡Que bendigan a su viaje de fe!

Paz y gozo

Roger Gustafson, Obispo
Sínodo de los Estados Centrales,
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América



From Our Seminaries

Master of Divinity - Collaborative Learning Explained

“Collaborative Learning students, who are involved in congregational or diaconal ministry during the entirety of theological education, bring to the classroom the daily practice of congregational ministry.” - Craig Nesson, Academic Dean

With our new hybrid curriculum WTS has embarked on a bold, innovative adventure in theological education. Known for the value of our life together in community as the heartbeat of the Wartburg way, we now seek to build one seminary and one teaching and learning community among a diverse and dispersed student population. Masters students now access their education in one of three models: residential (RL), distributed (DL), and collaborative (CL).

Each of these models adds its own unique value to the entire seminary community. Residential students are immersed in the rich and fulsome campus life that WTS has provided for generations. RL students bring to the teaching and learning community their experiences attending chapel and daily involvement in campus life to the enrichment of the whole. DL students bring their daily vocations in the local communities where they live—workplaces, congregation, family, and neighborhood—into the theological conversation through their coursework and relationships with the whole WTS community. CL students, who are involved in congregational or diaconal ministry during the entirety of their theological education, bring to the classroom the daily practice of congregational ministry. The joys and challenges they face in ministry become the basis for theological reflection with other students and the faculty. We consider each model to bring an added value to the entire mix of our life together at WTS.

What builds up our relationships together as one community are two distinctive features. First, the entire WTS community gathers for the prolog weeks at the beginning of each semester. We gather in the Loehe Chapel, Reu Memorial Library, Augusta von Schwartz Refectory, Weiblen Commons, and Fritschel Hall to build relationships with one another that sustain our academic life over the rest of the semester. Second, through the use of dynamic video technology in our classrooms and faculty offices, students at a distance can participate synchronously in the classroom and engage in life-giving conversations with faculty, staff, and student colleagues on a daily basis. With the support of the WTS constituency, we continue to evolve as a seminary and yet intentionally maintain our core commitment to be a worship centered community of critical theological reflection where learning leads to mission and mission informs learning.

We are fortunate to partner with synods like Central States Synod of the ELCA. Thank you, Bishop Gustafson, congregations, and ministries, including the candidacy committee, for your leadership and partnership as we continue to engage, equip, and send out leaders like Collaborative Learning student Teri Sutherland who serves St. James Lutheran Church in Garden City Kansas, with supervision from The Rev. Jon Brudvig.



Craig Nesson, Academic Dean, teaches a class during prolog week at Wartburg Seminary

Wartburg Seminary | Dubuque, Iowa | www.wartburgseminary.edu

563- 589-0200

From Our Seminaries

LSTC story cards highlight voices who share God's story

From Texas to Atlanta, from Milwaukee to India, graduates of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago are lifting their voices to tell God's story.

LSTC grads in the Central States Synod are too—from St. Louis, Mo., to Lenexa, Kan.

One of the ways LSTC is showcasing its graduates is with new "My LSTC story" cards. They're not exactly baseball trading cards, but let's just say those may have been the inspiration.

Matthew James, Director of Admissions, says that in his own call he has come to realize that he thrives on stories: "Stories reveal bits of who we are, what drives us, what led and continues to lead us to where we have been and where we're going."

James says this evangelism tool from LSTC gives the seminary an opportunity to share the stories of various members of the LSTC community. "Current students, alumni and supporters, connect with the story of LSTC, and, in turn, invite others, especially those considering a call to public ministry, to consider how their story might interweave with LSTC's story."

Eight cards have been published by the seminary, with more to follow. The stories are printed on 4 x 6 inch card stock, and are distributed to prospective students by LSTC Admissions and others.

The cards feature a colorful photo and quote from the storyteller on the front, and their brief story, in their own words, on back. Two cards feature current students who are part of the Public Church Fellows program. Four feature parish pastors—in Chicago, Milwaukee, Atlanta and Texas. Rounding out the collection are a professor of Christian Ethics in Bangalore, India, and the chair of LSTC's comprehensive campaign. A diverse group, and varying stories.

Three of the eight say they never intended to be pastors. One wrote, "I don't have an earth-shattering call story (no family of pastors, for instance) so it's a wonder I ended up at LSTC at all."

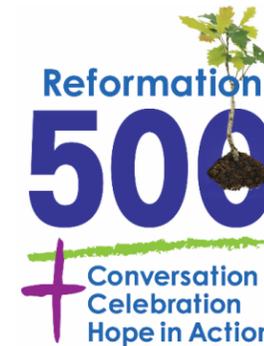
Like most in ministry, they experienced their "call" in many and varied ways and followed different paths to seminary. Their stories are remarkably different, but their message remarkably similar: grateful for how they have been prepared to serve the church and convinced, as one said, that she has "the gifts that the church needs."

Christine Yucha, Director of Assessment and Planning who had the idea for the story cards when she served in Admissions, says this medium leaves room for prospective students to see their own story as part of an expanding collection.

"The variety of stories reminds us that there is not just one voice or one experience of those who come to seminary. "The variety of stories reminds us that there is not just one voice or one experience of those who come to seminary. These stories remind us that there is room for more stories at LSTC—and that one of them could be your story, or your co-worker's, your child's or your parent's."



From Our 2017 Reformation Team 500



In 2017, Lutherans and other Christians worldwide marked the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in an astonishing variety of ways. In the Central States Synod, we sought observances that would be mindful of the past and fruitful for the future.

We praised God. On June 10, 2017, we concluded our annual synod assembly with a festival worship at Atonement, Overland Park, KS. Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton preached. A group of ecumenical guests led a remembrance of baptism, and each congregation took home a bottle of baptismal water to remind us all of our connectedness to one another in Christ through baptism.

We built bridges. On September 29, Bishop Gustafson joined Archbishop Joseph Naumann and Bishop James Johnston in an ecumenical prayer service in Kansas City. Roman Catholics and Lutherans in the St. Louis, MO area culminated a year of dialogue with a joint commemoration service on October 29 followed by a panel discussion with Bishop Denis Madden and Rev. Don McCoid from the ecumenical task force that produced "Declaration on the Way" the following morning. Multiple congregations entered into shared conversations and activities with neighboring communities to celebrate and foster our unity in Christ.

We made pilgrimages. About fifty travelers joined Rev. Mike Malone on one of three trips to Germany in 2017 to explore Reformation era and modern day sites. Ample time was included for morning devotions and theological "table talk" in the evenings so that those who accepted the "Invitation to Conversation" did more than sightsee—they deepened their faith and broadened their perspectives. Of course, they also



visited the brewery. "I really enjoyed this trip and learned a lot more than I expected," Steven Hoffman reflected. "The food was great, the fellowship was wonderful, and learning about Luther, the Reformation, and its relevance today was truly inspiring. Standing in the room where Luther translated and bible into German and sitting in the pews of the City church where Luther preached most of his sermons were two experiences I will never forget. Honestly, one of the best tours I've taken."



We planted trees. With help from a generous grant from the ELCA, the Central States Synod matched every tree planted across synod territory in commemoration of Reformation 500 with a second tree. These matching trees were shared with a Methodist Church, a school district, a Preschool, a civic beautification committee, One Good Meal, Mercy Meals, Habitat for Humanity, and Metro Lutheran Ministry of Kansas City. "A new school is being built to the south east of the church and is visible from our parking lot and fellowship hall. We chose to plant our second tree on the grounds of the newly built school with a plaque commemorating the 500th anniversary of the reformation," reports Rev. Elizabeth Cummings, Resurrection, Haysville, KS.

This offer still stands in 2018! Please plant a tree and receive a check for a matching tree. Information is available on the Central States Synod website.



And more! How did you commemorate the occasion?
What stories, photos, videos, memories and new initiatives does your congregation have to share?

From Our Presiding Bishop Eaton



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



Dear Dear Friends in Christ,
We are Lutheran. For the past year it has been “all Reformation all the time!” So now what? The Lutheran Confessions teach that God freely and graciously creates a trusting relationship between us and Jesus. As we gather to meet in synod assemblies, let us remember that our hope is in the living Christ and share that assurance with the joy of the gospel.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are free of the burden of making ourselves acceptable to God. The cross of Christ and the living Christ assure us that God's final word for us is life and freedom in Christ. Lutherans confidently and enthusiastically claim this promise: “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). How does this claim affect your faith journey as an individual, a congregation, synod or member of the church universal? Through his death and resurrection, we have a truly living Lord who meets us, forgives us and calls us to follow, and in that we find our freedom.

Because we are set free in Jesus Christ, we are free from trying to save ourselves and free for loving and serving others. As a church, we walk by faith, trusting God's promise in the gospel and knowing that we exist by and for the proclamation of this gospel word.

“Future Directions 2025”

Through “Called Forward Together in Christ – Future Directions 2025,” we are addressing the challenges and embracing the opportunities of the church we are becoming – a church that is confident about who we are in Christ and what God is calling us to do. I invite you to lift up these goals and engage how we journey forward in Christ as church together. You can learn more by visiting ELCA.org/future.

ELCA Youth Gathering

Many of us will be together at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston June 27-July 1, 2018. I look forward to sharing in the excitement and energy of our young people as they experience the wonder and joy of being with more than 30,000 Lutherans and grow in their faith formation. For information and resources on the Gathering, go to ELCA.org/gathering.

The Campaign for the ELCA

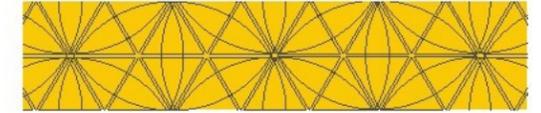
We are in our final year of Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA. Help us rally to the end! As of Dec. 31, the campaign has received more than \$138.6 million in cash and multiyear commitments, representing 70 percent of our \$198 million goal. Read more about the campaign's progress at ELCA.org/campaign. Thank you for your continued support!

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”
– Ephesians 2:8

From Our Partners in Ministry

PORTICO®

Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA



Spring 2018

We are church together.

This call from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is at the core of Portico's identity: We serve those who serve the church, so they can serve others. Ecclesiastes 4:12 reads, “a three-fold cord is not easily broken.” Imagine, then, the resilience that comes from a community more than 50,000 strong that includes:

- Active and retired rostered ministers, lay employees, and family members
- Congregations, synodical and churchwide ministries, and social ministry organizations
- The dedicated and talented staff at Portico Benefit Services

Together, we pool our resources and carefully steward our gifts, leveraging our collective strength to provide the care our members need. Together, we walk the path toward financial, emotional, and physical well-being, so all might experience God's abundant life. Together, we are church.

In 2017, our community's size and scope allowed Portico to:

Deliver personalized support that helps our members live well.

- Skillful Portico Care Coordinators by Quantum Health helped more than 70% of members with ELCA-Primary health coverage navigate the complex world of health care.
- More than 400 members enrolled in Livongo's innovative diabetes management program to make living with diabetes easier and more cost-effective.
- 35% of our sponsored members used Portico's Retirement Planning Tool to get a comprehensive picture of how much they're saving, and how it might last in retirement.
- 3,500+ members gained a better understanding of their financial picture after talking with our new in-house team of credentialed Portico Financial Planners.

Exceed our goals for practicing good financial stewardship.

- Over and above a record-breaking year for the markets, the expertise of our investment management team demonstrated our commitment to a long-term, diversified approach to investing.
- For the second year in a row, administrative efficiencies and innovative plan adjustments allowed us to hold our baseline increase for ELCA-Primary health benefits to 5% — below the national trend of 6.5%.
- Benefiting from the run of growth in the markets and strategic fund management, we announced a 4.0% increase in the ELCA Participating Annuity payments for 2018, the sixth consecutive annual increase.

Speak with one voice on behalf of those who serve the church.

- As part of the Church Alliance, Portico joined with 37 other denominations to advocate for legislation to protect 403(b)(9) plans designed to help churchworkers save for retirement.
- On behalf of ELCA investors, our shareholder advocacy team championed a history-making climate-change resolution at a major energy-producing company.

The church is a shining example of what happens when we come together to care for one another. Lives are changed, hearts are touched, hurts are healed, hope is shared. We are grateful to lead the ELCA in the good work of wellness, and thankful for your partnership that makes this possible.

We are church together — and together, in Jesus' name, we are creating abundant life for those who serve.

In Christ,

The Rev. Jeffrey D. Thiemann
President and CEO

From Our Partners in Ministry



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



The Mission Investment Fund (MIF) is the lending ministry of the ELCA. MIF makes low-interest loans to ELCA congregations and ELCA-related ministries for building and renovation projects. With MIF loans, congregations and ministries can purchase property, construct new buildings, and expand or renovate existing facilities.

MIF loans expand the capacity for ministry. MIF loans help create expanded worship spaces, updated space for education and youth ministry, new kitchens for community meals and soup kitchens, affordable housing units for the community and much more.

At year-end 2017, MIF had 888 loans outstanding, totaling \$539.1 million.

To fund these loans, MIF offers a portfolio of investments for congregations, their members, synods and ELCA-related ministries to purchase. At year-end 2017, MIF investments totaled \$506 million.

MIF is a financially strong and stable organization, with a record of steady, controlled growth. With total assets of \$715.7 million and net assets of \$203.9 million at year-end 2017, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 28.5 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds. For more information, visit mif.elca.org.

MIF loans and investments in the Central States Synod (as of December 31, 2017):

- 16 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$7,586,883
- \$10,306,234 in Mission Investment Fund investments

MIF representative:

The Rev. Pamela E. Dorman, Regional Manager
Tel: (224) 935-7243; email: pam.dorman@elca.org

Mission Investment Fund | 8765 West Higgins Road | Chicago, Illinois 60631 | Tel: 877-886-3522 | Web: mif.elca.org

“God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday

Sept. 9 is our suggested date for the 2018 dedicated day of service. If your congregation cannot participate on this date, please consider another day. “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday is an opportunity for us to explore one of our most basic convictions as Lutherans: that all of life in Jesus Christ – every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life – flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God’s grace. To order T-shirts or download resources, go to ELCA.org/dayofservice.

Join the conversation

There are two opportunities for you to provide feedback about what this church says on important issues. One is “Draft of a Social Statement on Women and Justice.” The draft is in two sections: basic theses and fuller explanations, which speak about how sexism harms us all in church and society. The task force wants to hear from you about the content of the draft and this innovative format. Find the draft, supplementary materials and order information at ELCA.org/womenandjustice. The other is on the draft of “A Declaration of our Inter-Religious Commitment: A Draft Policy Statement of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” The comment period is open from now until June 30, 2018. Visit ELCA.org/ecumenical for more information and the document.

I have shared some of the ways we are loving and serving our neighbor. This is what being free in Christ looks like. This is part of our Lutheran story. This is part of your congregation’s story and your synod’s story.

Wherever you are for your synod assembly, from the Alaska Synod to the Caribbean Synod, there is something that we all have in common – our life in Christ. We have our life in Christ – in the crucified and risen Savior, in the one who poured out his life for us, the one who gave himself away for the life of the world so we may be free. As Lutheran Christians, we live in the freedom of Christ.

With gratitude,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

De Eaton de Obispo Presidente



Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América

La obra de Dios. Nuestras manos.



Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

Somos luteranos. El pasado año las cosas han sido "¡todo Reforma todo el tiempo!" Y entonces, ¿ahora qué? Las Confesiones Luteranas enseñan que Dios crea, gratuita y misericordiosamente, una relación de confianza entre Jesús y nosotros. Mientras nos reunimos en las asambleas sinodales, recordemos que nuestra esperanza está en el Cristo vivo, y compartamos esa seguridad con el gozo del evangelio.

Por medio de la muerte y resurrección de Jesucristo somos libres de la carga de tratar por nosotros mismos de ser aceptables ante Dios. La cruz de Cristo y el Cristo vivo nos aseguran que la palabra final de Dios para nosotros es vida y libertad en Cristo. Los luteranos reclamamos con confianza y entusiasmo esta promesa: "Cristo nos libertó para que vivamos en libertad" (Gálatas 5:1). ¿Cómo afecta esta declaración su jornada de fe como individuo, congregación, sínodo o miembro de la iglesia universal? Por medio de su muerte y resurrección, tenemos un Señor verdaderamente vivo que nos encuentra, perdona y nos llama a seguirlo, y en ello encontramos nuestra libertad.

Porque somos hechos libres en Jesucristo, somos libres de tratar de salvarnos a nosotros mismos, y libres para amar y servir a otros. Como iglesia caminamos por fe, confiando en la promesa de Dios en el evangelio, y sabiendo que existimos por y para la proclamación de esta palabra del evangelio.

"Futuras Direcciones 2025"

Por medio de "Llamados a Seguir Adelante Juntos en Cristo – Futuras Direcciones 2025," estamos abordando los retos y aceptando las oportunidades de la iglesia en la que nos estamos convirtiendo – una iglesia que confía en quiénes somos en Cristo y en lo que Dios nos está llamando a hacer. Le invito a que se una a nosotros en la consecución de estas metas a medida que avanzamos en nuestra jornada en Cristo. Puede obtener más información visitando ELCA.org/future.

Asamblea Juvenil de la ELCA

Muchos de nosotros estaremos juntos en la Asamblea Juvenil de la ELCA en Houston, del 27 de junio al primero de Julio de 2018. Anhelo ser parte de la emoción y energía de nuestros jóvenes mientras experimentan el asombro y la alegría de estar con más de 30,000 luteranos y aumentan la formación de su fe. Para información y recursos sobre la Asamblea, visite ELCA.org/gathering.

La Campaña para la ELCA

Estamos en nuestro año final de Siempre Siendo Hechos Nuevos: La Campaña para la ELCA. Ayúdenos a reunir hasta el final. Hasta el 31 de diciembre, la campaña había recibido más de \$138.6 millones en efectivo y compromisos multianuales, lo que representa el 70 por ciento de nuestra meta de \$198 millones. Lea más sobre el progreso de la campaña en ELCA.org/campaign. ¡Gracias por su apoyo continuo!

"Porque por gracia ustedes han sido salvados mediante la fe; esto no procede de ustedes, sino que es regalo de Dios".
– Efesios 2:8

From Our Lutheran Planned Giving Partnership/ELCA Foundation Central States /Arkansas-Oklahoma Synods



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Regional Gift Planner: Stephen E. Phelps, MA, CFRE

Thank you for your partnership in this ministry of providing planned giving services to the ELCA congregations, members, institutions and agencies within the Central States (CSS) and Arkansas-Oklahoma Synods (AOK). The work we do together, inviting every ELCA member to consider remembering one or more ministries of the ELCA as part of their philanthropic giving plans, is so very important to the churches, institutions and individuals we help as well as the future of our church. It continues to be a pleasure to work with and represent each of the partners within the Lutheran Planned Giving Partnership (LPG) of the CSS and AOK Synods. The LPG CSS/AOK Partnership includes: **Bethany College, Camp Tomah Shinga, Hollis Renewal Center, Lutheran Family and Children's Services of Missouri, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Lutheran Campus Ministry of the CSS Synod, Lutheran Campus Ministry of the AOK Synod, The Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod, The Central States Synod, Oaks Indian Mission, Wartburg Seminary and the ELCA Foundation.**



Stephen E. Phelps-RGP
working with a congregation

Together, being in partnership with the LPG CSS/AOK and the ELCA Foundation we achieve things on a scale and scope that we could never do otherwise. We are Church Together! As our faith matures and deepens, so does the way we support God's work in the world. The LPG CSS/AOK and the ELCA Foundation exist to sustain and grow our ministries by stewarding assets for all the related organizations of the ELCA. Utilizing a variety of deferred giving vehicles offered by the ELCA Foundation, the regional gift planners work with individual congregational members and churches to develop giving plans that reflect family and ministry values.

In 2017, through its network of Regional Gift Planners, the ELCA Foundation created over \$33 million in gift plans with over 100 individuals and families! **The LPG of CSS/AOK Synods saw over 12 church members make decisions for their estate plans by designating over \$3 million for charitable causes. A significant portion of this charitable intent, (nearly \$2.7 million) is being directed towards our synods, congregations and ELCA related missions within the LPG CSS/AOK!**

In addition to working with individuals, The LPG CSS/AOK also works in partnership with congregations to assist them with creating comprehensive **Ministry Funding Plans** which help congregations identify financial needs and goals. As we gather as a synod to do the work of the church we should consider how we will continue to fund God's work in the world. Some key questions to answer...

- Does your congregation have a current gift policy?**
- Does your congregation have a current endowment and governing by-law document?**
- Does your congregation have a Ministry Funding Plan?**
- Does your congregation have a planned giving program?**
- Do you have a will?**
- Do you have an estate plan?**

We continue to face a major shift in sustainable funding for ministry...having an individual estate plan is essential. The LPG CSS/AOK is here to help you and your congregation meet these challenges! **BEGIN NOW!**

"For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building;" 1 Corinthians 3:9

In Service,

Stephen E. Phelps, MA, CFRE

Regional Gift Planner LPG-CSS/AOK

314-703-6949 stephen.phelps@elca.org



Mosaic's Mission
Embracing God's call to serve in the world, Mosaic advocates for people with intellectual disabilities and provides opportunities for them to enjoy a full life.



Mosaic Allied Voices

If you'd like to help people with disabilities in a direct way, please join our advocacy group, Mosaic Allied Voices (MAV). You'll learn about the important issues facing people with disabilities and how you can help in simple ways, like a phone call or email.

Visit



www.mosaicalliedvoices.org to learn more.

Rejoicing Spirits

Rejoicing Spirits, a ministry of Mosaic, celebrates and values every person's talents and gifts, offering people of all abilities an opportunity

From Our Partners in Ministry

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:



Dear friends,

Our work at Mosaic is filled with surprising, spontaneous moments that regularly remind us why we do what we do. As example, the following conversation took place after a woman Mosaic supports surprised everyone with her piano talent, playing a wide repertoire of songs.

Employee: Shari, did you have a piano growing up?

Shari: Oh, no.

Employee: Did you ever take piano lessons or have a piano teacher?

Shari: No. No, I didn't.

Employee: Did anyone in your family play the piano?

Shari: No. Just me.

Employee: So Shari, who taught you how to play? How do you know all those songs?

Shari: **God. God teaches me how to play. He teaches me the songs I need to know.**

People of faith know that God is always at work—and sometimes works to surprise us!

We have many stories similar to Shari's and we share them to help people understand Mosaic's mission of service and advocacy: We provide a meaningful life in a caring community, giving a voice to people's needs. How that happens looks different for every person we serve.

Shari lives on her own but can't be fully independent. We work with her about 15 hours a week, helping her with the things she can't do, like finances, doctor's visits, etc. Mosaic also serves people who need assistance 24 hours a day, every day.

It is a mission we could not fulfill without you, our church partners. We are grateful for the many churches and faithful people who support our ministry across the United States. Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

Linda Timmons

Linda Timmons, Mosaic President and CEO



Mosaic | 4980 S. 118th St. | Omaha, NE 68137-2200 | 877.366.7242 | www.mosaicinfo.org

Domingo de "La obra de Dios. Nuestras manos".

El 9 de septiembre es la fecha sugerida para el día dedicado al servicio en 2018. Si su congregación no puede participar en esta fecha, sírvase considerar otro día. El domingo de "La obra de Dios. Nuestras manos" es una oportunidad para que exploremos una de nuestras convicciones más básicas como luteranos: que toda la vida en Jesucristo – todo acto de servicio en cada llamado diario, en cada pequeña parte de la vida – fluye libremente de una viva y osada confianza en la gracia de Dios. Para ordenar camisetas o descargar recursos, vaya a ELCA.org/dayofservice.

Únase a la conversación

Hay dos oportunidades para que usted haga sus comentarios sobre lo que dice esta iglesia acerca de asuntos importantes. Una es el "Borrador del pronunciamiento social sobre la mujer y la justicia". El borrador tiene dos secciones: las tesis básicas y las explicaciones exhaustivas, las cuales hablan de cómo el sexismo nos hace daño a todos en la iglesia y la sociedad. El grupo de trabajo desea oír de usted con respecto al contenido del borrador y a este formato innovador. Encuentre el borrador, los materiales suplementarios y la información para pedidos en ELCA.org/womenandjustice. La otra es el borrador de "Una declaración de nuestro compromiso interreligioso: Borrador de la declaración de la política de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América". El período de comentarios está abierto desde ahora hasta el 30 de junio de 2018. Visite ELCA.org/ecumenical para obtener más información y el documento.

He compartido algunas de las formas en que estamos amando y sirviendo a nuestro prójimo. Así es como se ve el ser libres en Cristo. Esto es parte de nuestra historia luterana. Esto es parte de la historia de su congregación y de la historia de su sínodo.

Dondequiera que usted esté en la asamblea de su sínodo, ya sea en el Sínodo de Alaska o en el Sínodo del Caribe, hay algo que todos tenemos en común – nuestra vida en Cristo. Tenemos nuestra vida en Cristo – en el Salvador crucificado y resucitado, en el que derramó su vida por nosotros, aquel que se entregó por la vida del mundo para que seamos libres. Como cristianos luteranos vivimos en la libertad de Cristo.

Con gratitud,

Elizabeth A. Eaton

La Rvda. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Obispa Presidente
Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América

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From Our Synod and Churchwide's Candidacy Committee

"Candidacy" is the term by which the ELCA refers to its work of accompaniment and formation with people who are preparing to serve as rostered ministry leaders – pastors and deacons – in the ELCA. Each synod has a Candidacy committee that carries out that work on behalf of the ELCA in relation to the men and women who discern a vocation to prepare for public ministry leadership in this church. Candidacy committees work with synod staff and other synod leaders to carry out their work. Rev. Cherlyne Beck is the ELCA Candidacy Leadership Manager for Regions 4 & 6 and joined the committee in August 2017.

In the Central States Synod, there are 18 active candidates. Ten candidates have home congregations in Kansas. Eight candidates are connected to congregations in Missouri. Within the past year, the Candidacy committee met in August, December and April.

- Six new candidates were approved for **Entrance** into Candidacy;
- Four candidates met with Candidacy committee representatives, their seminary advisor and a seminary professor for **Endorsement** of their candidacy journey;
- Three candidates met with the Candidacy committee for **Approval**. One candidate received approval for Reinstatement to the Roster of the ELCA. All four will remain within the Central States Synod.

The candidates are scattered among five seminaries (Wartburg Seminary (9), Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (3), Luther Seminary (4), United Lutheran Seminary (2), and Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary. Currently, CSS has three seminarians on internship in **settings** in Minneapolis, MN; Chicago, IL and Charlottesville, VA.

The Candidacy committee consists of 12 members from within the Synod. Deacon Dave Mareske was selected as the Chair of the committee. Vickie Minter (Lay), Deacon Carolyn Wilson and Rev. Del Strecker joined the committee in December 2017 for a 5-year term.

Candidacy committee request: Consider the people you know in your congregation or other ministry setting who demonstrate interest and gifts relevant to public ministry leadership, and encourage them to consider a vocation to serve as deacons or pastors in the ELCA. Also, then, assist them in connecting with your synod's Candidacy committee so that they might begin their journey of formation and preparation.



CSS Candidate - Melissa Woeppel
Internship - Peace Lutheran, Charlottesville, VA
Preaching at Easter Sunrise service.



CSS Candidate - Mathew Berger
Leading Bible Study with high school students

From Our Partners in Ministry



Bishop Kemper School for Ministry (BKSM), has just wrapped up its third year of providing academic coursework and spiritual formation for students called to the vocation of Parish Ministry Associate (PMA), which prepares lay leaders to serve their local congregation in a variety of ways.

Located in Topeka, Ks., the Bishop Kemper School for ministry began in 2013 as a collaborative partnership of four Episcopal dioceses to provide academic formation for future priests, deacons and lay leaders in the Episcopal Church. In Fall 2015, BKSM welcome its first Lutheran student taking coursework to become a Parish Ministry Associate (PMA).

To date, two students have completed the PMA coursework available through Bishop Kemper School for Ministry. During the 2017-18 academic year, four new students began their course of study, representing churches in Emporia, Smith Center, Kansas City, and St. Louis. Currently, students can take six of seven required PMA courses through BKSM, including Bible, Lutheran worship, ethics, preaching and pastoral care. Some students choose to take extra courses as electives.

The Very Rev. Dr. Don Compier, BKSM dean, is grateful for the infusion of Lutheran students at the school. He says, "At Bishop Kemper School for Ministry we have a passion for Christian unity. We believe that when we work together across denominational lines, we can accomplish more than we ever could alone. The ELCA is a special partner to the Episcopal Church as we have full communion and mutual recognition of ministries. We are a co-learning environment, knowing that students (and professors!) learn so much from each other. Our Lutheran students have enriched our community and our formation together in Christ. We are most grateful!"

In addition to students, BKSM is pleased that three instructors from Bethany College are part of the School's faculty: Dr. Tyler Atkinson, Dr. Arminta Fox, and Dr. Adam Pryor. Additionally, Pastor George Pejokovich, who serves as Assistant to the Dean of Grace Cathedral, Topeka, serves as long-time homiletics instructor.

In this last year, Bishop Kemper School for Ministry has also formed a more formal alliance with Bethany House of Studies in Lindsborg, Ks, and the Lutheran School of Theology in St. Louis, Mo., to make it easier for students to take classes closer to home, when available, but with the coursework being readily accepted and recognized by the other two institutions.

BKSM programs and courses are not just open to those students wishing to become Parish Ministry Associates. BKSM welcomes any student interested in taking coursework for continuing education or personal enrichment. No prior college is required to take classes, just an openness and willingness to learn. Students may choose to audit a class for \$100, which includes all meals and overnight accommodations at Upton Hall.

In Fall 2017, BKSM launched a new program of study for lay evangelists. While all baptized Christians are commissioned to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and make disciples, some may have the desire to become better equipped and empowered to do so. This eight-course program of study, which is not particular to Episcopalians, explores Christian spirituality, contemporary culture, mission, communications and, of course, evangelism, to better prepare lay leaders to equip others to make Jesus' love, mercy and forgiveness known in their given ministry context.

Learn more about this unique educational opportunity at www.bishopkemperschool.org



From Our Campus Ministries

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Kansas State University

It may be a bit of a stereotype, but it seems that Lutherans, in general, are shy folks. Our Lutheran Campus Ministry students this year are no exception! Add to this that most of them are studying Agriculture, Computer Science, or Engineering, it seems the odds of shyness go up. One of our Engineering students recently asked me, "How can you tell if an engineer is extroverted? He looks at YOUR shoes!"

Needless to say, sharing our faith, is something with which many of our LCM students struggle. With that in mind, our Bible Study theme this year is "Connections." The focus of the study has been on finding connections in our own lives with the characters in Bible stories, and then sharing those personal connections with others gathered around the table.

"Who in your life has shared their faith in Christ with you", we asked, as we studied the story of Jesus calling the first disciples, who in turn invited others to "come and see." "What doubts and questions do you have", we asked, as we read the story of Thomas. "When have you struggled in your faith", we asked, as we read the story of Peter sinking in the Sea of Galilee.

Some of these questions were quite personal, and students at times struggled to be able to share their own stories with the other students around the table. However, if we are unable to share our stories of faith and doubt with those "in the pew next to us", how will we be able to share our faith with those outside of our congregations?

I am happy to say that our Lutheran Campus Ministry students not only grew in their faith this year, but grew in their ability and boldness to share that faith with others!

The Rev. Kevin Clark—

Pastor, Lutheran Campus Ministry at Kansas State University



From Our Synod's Mission Endowment Committee

This past October, a question was on many Lutheran lips – what is God going to do over the next 500 years? A different, unspoken question was in the hearts of many churchgoers – what's the future of 'my church'? God's mission has stood the test of time – Go, baptize, teach, and proclaim the Good News of God in Christ Jesus. Yet, we often worry about 'our' piece of it all. "What about our building?" "Our clergy keep getting older." "Our congregations seem smaller." "The money. Oh! don't bring up the money!"

The Synod's Mission Endowment Fund board focuses on God's mission from a different outlook: Are we presiding over the 'death of the church', or are we in the midst of Holy Saturday, that interstitial time between Good Friday and Easter morning? Perhaps God is up to something? So, we wait, and we hold our collective breath, teetering on the brink of the announcement of the resurrection.

In this last year, as individuals were entrusted to God's providential care and congregations were sent in peace to serve the Lord in a new and different way, their legacies have found a foothold in announcing the Resurrection in new ways through the efforts of the Mission Endowment Fund as over \$500,000 was entrusted to the Mission Endowment Fund – (including generous gifts from the estate of William R. Betker and Faith Lutheran Church, Prairie Village). Some of the legacies were designated for seminary scholarships, some for grant requests, some to increase the funds already in place – yet all were given in faith and trust to see God's work done in ways that we may not and cannot ever see. Take a look:

- \$125,416 in grants and scholarships were distributed to further the Kingdom's work to baptize, teach, and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- That breath-holding regarding the aging or emptying pulpits is infused with the breath of God - \$81,360 went to raising up rostered ministers, deacons, and PMAs.
- Congregations in the midst of transition or looking toward at transitions have a partner on that road – the St. Louis transitional ministry initiative is a collaborative effort to effectively plan long-term leadership moves, share resources, and address the topics and difficulties associated with transition complexities.

Congregations, congregants, and the church have been and will always be in the midst of transition because God is up to something in and through it all, even matters of death and life. Good Friday's reality balks at the proclamation of Easter morning, and is captured by Jesus' words in John 12:24, **"Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."** Fruit is being borne in the shared work of the Kingdom. That is what gives Paul confidence to proclaim this bold reality in addressing the Corinthian church – **"What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."** (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

God gives the growth. We tend, water, accompany, provide as we are able: new mission starts are supported, seminarians receive scholarships, ministry initiatives are funded, and barriers to the inward worry of the institution's longevity wither and fade. God's life-giving Spirit is on the move, and through our Mission Endowment Fund's work and stewardship, much fruit is borne. Thanks be to God!

From Our Synod's Stewardship Team

At a recent ecumenical meeting, a person was overheard asking others in a small group if they had a Coach* to help them get to their key goals more effectively and efficiently. The other persons (a new start pastor and a couple of leaders) from the same new start church smiled and confidently all shook their heads 'YES'!

This conversation may feel out of context in a church setting, even counter-intuitive to the work that we place our hope and trust in the Holy Spirit.

Yet here in Central States Synod, the Holy Spirit is a part of this mighty work being done through COACHING! CSS launched Stewardship Coaching a couple of summers ago at the Assembly. Two ELCA Members and leaders (Rhonda Templing and Jered Horn) took advantage of the resources and both have expressed gratitude for this opportunity and felt their Stewardship Competencies have grown for real impact in the church!

For Rhonda: She has developed new 'stewardship' lens in looking at Scripture and finding a stewardship emphasis in just about any biblical passage! A desire she realized she had through coaching was to tell narratives, being bolder to talk with others and share her stories about the beauty of God's abundance in being a good steward! She hopes to help others by positively influencing their move away from a scarcity mentality. She has positively impacted the leadership team for the Women of the ELCA.

For Jered: He gained more confidence in his faith and the stewarding of a stronger financial perspective with a heart of giving. In coaching he discerned to volunteer to help with forming and shaping faith lives with the Youth at St. John's Lutheran Church where he and his family attend. Stewarding the desires the Spirit calls forth from our hearts is an important outcome of our Christian lives and from Coaching!

**A Coach is someone who chooses to invest what they have been given to accelerate someone else's development or accomplishment by asking powerful questions.*

From Our Synod's Church and Society Team

Neighbors United - Undoing Racism is a local organization in Franklin County, MO. Started over 15 years ago by a several churches including ELCA Lutheran, UCC, and Baptist congregations, the group sought to build fellowship opportunities for building relationships across racial boundaries. Over the years, the group had waned as membership aged. However, in the wake of Ferguson, Pastor Aimee Appell of Peace Lutheran got together with a few of the former leaders and some of the younger members of the African-American clergy in the area to discuss how to revive the organization. Interest was strong, and new work began. Since then, membership has grown and the focus has shifted from being a church-based group to inviting in people from across the community. We have found support from the local community college, libraries, churches, and secular organizations. We have developed a mission statement: *"Undo racism by providing opportunities for all people to be treated with dignity and respect through education and communication."* Our main projects include an annual Martin Luther King Day program, the Stories Matter campaign, and Vacation Culture School.

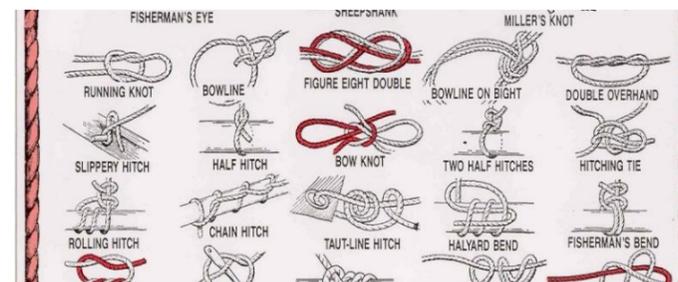
Stories Matter is a campaign to provide books with diverse themes and characters to libraries and families throughout our communities, along with discussion guides and support to facilitate conversations about race, ethnicity, and identity. So far we have raised funds to purchase a set of 15 books for each branch of the Scenic Regional Library system and the Washington Public Library. This group has booths at local family events, does craft projects, and encourages diverse representation in libraries and schools in our region.

Vacation Culture School was a pilot project last summer based on the model of Vacation Bible School so familiar to most people in our community. Each evening for 5 nights, we gathered to learn about the cultures associated with the 5 major world religions: Christianity (focusing on African-American culture and Juneteenth); Judaism (from the Reformed tradition); Islam (with five local Muslim families from various countries); Hinduism (with folks from the St. Louis Hindu Temple); and Buddhism (with the help of the Mid-American Buddhist Association). Using religion as a jumping-off point, we explored the rich diversity of rituals, food, games, and stories in our world. We worked with individuals from each of these communities in order to accurately represent them. Last year, we had over 100 participants across all age groups. This year, we are planning to shift our focus from religions to regions, to demonstrate the diversity within each world region.

The primary purpose of all of these projects is to encourage our community to welcome and embrace its shifting demographics. We believe this is best done through the building of relationships. Each of us comes to this work from our own faith tradition, but we find that all of our traditions have a heart for relationship and justice. We are working together to live out our faith in community.

From Our Renewal Center

TYING THE KNOT AT HOLLIS



Two things have been on the increase at Hollis Renewal Center: Eagle Scout Projects and Weddings.

At first, you might think they have nothing in common.

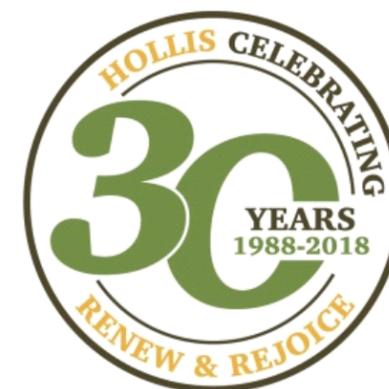
We had an Eagle Scout candidate complete his project in 2017, get everything approved and then his scoutmaster realized he never completed his knot tying certification. He could tie knots — just that he never was seen tying knots by the right people. So, as a gesture of fun and goodwill, prior to his court of honor (which was held at Hollis) we held a knot tying session. Hollis averages five Eagle Scout projects each year.

In 2017 Hollis hosted thirteen weddings — over one per month. We are on course to break that record in 2018. Weddings bring many people to Hollis that may never have ventured here otherwise. Some of those guests return with their church or work group to use Hollis. Last year we had a wedding on a lovely day in November. But about a week later, the couple realized that their wedding certificate was not signed. So, as a gesture of fun and goodwill, the pastor, bride, groom and witnesses returned to Hollis for short signing party, and to officially (I guess) tie the knot.



Completion and closure is often slippery in our culture. With the busyness and accelerated pace of life, the bombardment of news and information, and the host of virtual relationships we try to maintain, finding the time and brain-power to tie the knot on projects and responsibilities can be difficult. Taking time away is equally hard because the unchecked "to-do" list keeps us from spending time in retreat and rest.

It might be that rest and retreat is the very thing we need to complete the daunting list of projects and responsibilities. A guest recently remarked, "walking the labyrinth on Sunday morning was the very thing I didn't know I needed." I hope you find rest and that you may find your way to Hollis.



Hollis has been at the Bonner Springs location 30 years this year. We Purchased the property on June 6, 1988. We are planning some cool events this year so please contact us or visit our website for complete information: www.holliscenter.org

Dave Mareske, Executive Director, Hollis Center

From Our Camp



Greetings Central States Synod!

YOUR Camp Tomah Shinga has been doing wonderful things this year! In 2017 we had 475 campers and we continue to grow every year! We are extremely excited to announce that we will have an entirely new program site ready to go for summer 2018! We are stacking up numbers in traditional and confirmation camps. More and more of our congregations have worked tirelessly to support the mission of Camp Tomah Shinga. We now have campers coming from all across the country to participate in our wonderful intentional Christian community out at camp!

A few things we have done in partnership with our Synod this year:

- Middle School Retreat
- High School Pre-Gathering Retreat
- Lutheran's Restoring Creation Retreat (Rev. Noni Strand)
- Women's Spirituality Retreat (Lynde Langdon)
- Lutheran Disaster Response Planning
- Vocational Discernment Retreat
- SUMMER CAMP!

We have also engaged in new and exciting partnerships with:

- Bethany College
- Metro Lutheran Ministries
- Central States Synod
- Arkansas/Oklahoma Synod
- ELCA Church wide office
- Lutheran Outdoor Ministries

A huge thank you to everyone in the Central States Synod for the support and participation out at camp. It is an incredible movement to see so many people owning such a valuable ministry to our Church and communities. I encourage you to continue to engage and volunteer out at camp as you are able. It truly is an incredible spiritual experience to be a part of! Blessings to you all this year!

Peace,

Ben Fulton, Executive Director - Camp Tomah Shinga, Junction City



From Our Synod's Companion Synod Team

A lesson in Evangelism from our Companion Synod (CoSyn) Christians in Russia.

My wife, Anita, and I were a part of the Companion Synod Team that visited Russia for three weeks during the end of September and the beginning of October. I was invited to preach at a small German/Russian speaking congregation in the village of Kazanka, which is located an hour's drive outside of Omsk, Siberia. The pastor of the church spoke German and Russian but very little English. I speak German and English but no Russian. My wife and Pastor Jon Brudvig of Trinity, Great Bend who was also there spoke no German or Russian.

I preached for about fifteen minutes in German. The pastor of this church, Rev. Stanislav Mikula, said to me after the sermon that in this church, fifteen minutes was not enough. He turned to Rev. Jon Brudvig and asked him what was a favorite text that he liked to preach on. Jon replied, Romans 6:3-5. Pastor Stas, as he is referred to by his congregation, read the passage in German and Russian and then asked Jon to explain why it was his favorite and what impact this passage should have on those listening to him. Pastor Jon though surprised, extemporized for about 5 minutes with the help of a translator.



After Pastor Jon finished, Pastor Stas then preached for an additional 15 minutes. In his sermon he pointed to the window behind his parishioners. He said that this window was one of the best evangelism tools that the Christians in Kazanka had at their disposal. He said everyone looks out of their window to see what is happening on the street. He said that when they saw someone they knew walking or driving by, that was an excellent time to pray for them. If they were a member of their worshipping community, then they needed to pray for increased gifts of the Holy Spirit. If they were a member of another worshipping community, they should pray for their well-being. If they were a total stranger, then they should pray for a safe journey to their home. If they were someone they knew to be an atheist, then they should pray for their conversion. He said Evangelism begins with prayer and lots of it. If they saw these people in person, then they could share that they had prayed for them. He stated that sharing that simple thought with someone else could lead to far deeper conversation. This he felt was Evangelism at its most basic level.



The Holy Spirit used the gifts of all those present that morning to share the message of the Gospel. Even though we did not share a common language to communicate directly with each other, we were united in our relationship with Christ. We did a lot of singing that morning in the German language. Pastor Brudvig stated to me that beside our common faith, we had the common language of music. Even though my wife and Jon did not speak German they could sing those melodies and we all were united in the love of Christ through song.

**The Rev. Delvin Strecker, Pastor
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Wilson, Kansas
and
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Lucas, Kansas**

From Our Synod's Mission Tables

Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table

The Central States Synod Lutherans Restoring Creation (LRC) Mission Table is made up of volunteers from across the Synod who feel passionate about caring for creation and want to empower others to learn and act on behalf of all that God has made. Through monthly conference calls and offering workshops throughout the Synod, we share God's story in creation and facilitate the sharing of stories about how congregations can use worship, buildings and grounds, education, discipleship in daily life, and advocacy to be better stewards of creation. Here are two stories from recent workshop attendees.



Kaylie Ines is a senior at Bethany College and will attend Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in the fall. She is a member of Reformation Lutheran in Wichita. Kaylie writes, "By attending the LRC workshop I was able to engage and reflect on what it means to be an advocate for sustainability - as a Lutheran and as a human being. I got a better understanding of why Lutherans care for all of creation. It took my perspective from just a theological idea and expanded it to think about the ethical imperative for the church. I am thankful for this experience and the fellowship shared at the workshop. It was inspiring to engage others and to share ideas on what we can do to help care for creation. I have brought this knowledge and passion back to campus with me and have shared them with our campus pastor. We are looking to organize an Earth Day celebration event. My goal is to help rebuild the interest in creation care with younger students by doing smaller projects to peak an interest and leave behind ideas for bigger projects for a team to tackle when we have sustainable numbers. Our Earth Day Event will also engage others in creation care as we partner with a local church and our on-campus Art Club!"



Josh Thede is a member of the City of Mission, KS, Sustainability Commission; President of the U.S. Green Building Council's Emerging Professionals - Central Plains Chapter; and works as an Acoustical Consultant at Henderson Engineers in Lenexa, KS. Josh did volunteer service in Peru where he lived and worked in the Amazon Rainforest for three weeks doing reforestation, animal monitoring, research, and organic agriculture. He also served as a Camp Counselor at Carol Joy Holling in Ashland, NE. Josh is looking for a Lutheran congregation in the KC area that will help him make a positive impact on the planet. Josh writes, "I was impressed and encouraged by the activities churches are

already doing, including solar panels, energy star-rated buildings, up cycling plastic bags into sleeping mats, sending youth outdoors in nature, reducing waste, and composting. I enjoyed that the event was framed in 'creation care' which is a different perspective than the secular climate action and clean energy that I am more familiar with. It was an incredible group of people including venture scouts, pastors, congregation staff, college students, camp directors, youth leaders, professors, carpenters, hikers, and more. Each had their own perspective and approach, but the overall theme was consistent: The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 25), and protecting the Earth should be a priority for all people and congregations. I left encouraged that by the Grace of God, we have hope that our actions will create a positive change to reduce the sin of greed and overconsumption, and increase protection and preservation of Earth."



From Our College

On Friday, February 23, 2018, Bethany College hosted the Urbild Reformation Conference. This was a day-long conference that took place as part of the celebration for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Bethany welcomed its wider community including the Bethany House of Studies to this conference. The seminar also invited surrounding undergraduates from McPherson College and Midland University alongside Bethany undergraduates to present academic essays. Clergy and laity attended, as well as Bethany College faculty, staff, and students.

This event extended a welcome to Keynote Speaker Bishop Munib Younan. Bishop Younan is the (Lutheran) Bishop of the Holy Land and Jordan. While here in the United States, he visited twelve ELCA colleges. Bethany College was honored to be one of these colleges.



It took place from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and was divided into three main parts. The morning session included presentations by Bethany's three religion professors: Dr. Tyler Atkinson, Dr. Arminta Fox, and Dr. Adam Pryor. They were accompanied by New Testament scholar and lecturer at Rutgers University (Religion Department), Dr. Matthew Ketchum. All four of these professors provided insight into the Gospel of Mark in accordance with select scriptures that appear in the Revised Common Lectionary. Dr. Ketchum explored the concept of discipleship; Dr. Pryor explored relationships between vulnerability and parables; Dr. Fox looked at the importance of women at the tomb; and Dr. Atkinson presented on messianic secrecy in the Gospel of Mark.

In the afternoon, Bethany welcomed Bishop Younan to speak to students, during which he discussed the three important issues for American students to know about the Israel/Palestine conflict. Bishop Younan was very honest and open in his conversation with the students. Following the Bishop's address, the student panels began. There were two sessions, and each session had four undergraduates presenting their research. Each session was moderated by a faculty member, and at the end of the gathering, the moderator facilitated an open discussion of the research presented. In the evening, student panelists and community guests were invited to have dinner with the Bishop Younan. The event offered words from President Jones and concluding remarks from the Bishop.

The day was packed full of wisdom and thought-provoking dialogue presented by all who participated in the conference. Bethany College extends thanks to all who made this event possible, to those who participated and shared research, and to the Bishop for making a special stop in Lindsborg!

Kaylie Ines, Bethany College Student

From Our Mission Start

The Bridge, St. Charles

The Bridge fosters life-giving relationships with God and neighbor by doing church differently. Our ministry is designed to offer places for relationships to form. Through coffee, community, and Fair Trade, we witness to how the Spirit draws people and creation into relation with one another, even across our differences. Every day, our Coffee House is filled with anyone from the commuter grabbing a quick cup of coffee on their way to work, to the youth of our community looking for a place to study.

Our baristas focus on cultivating conversation, making each person feel less like a customer and more like a neighbor. Different community groups gather throughout the week, such as our women's faith group, "Life, Love & Lattes." People of different political, economic, and religious backgrounds gather for support, to discuss difficult topics—even when they disagree, and to live into the diversity of the gospel.

Friday mornings, preschoolers flood in for Story Time, allowing parents a break to relax with friends. Our Fair Trade ministry offers items crafted by artisans and farmers across the world as a means of connecting people's purchasing power with justice. Our worship events attract many people disenfranchised with traditional church. We weave prayer stations, preaching, discussion, and music around Communion. Our future life together will continue to witness collaboratively to God's Reign, in small ways that already shine forth—in each cup of coffee, each Fair Trade item sold, each relationship formed at The Bridge, and, best of all, in yet unforeseen ways.

Mr. Kevin Beebe, Intern
www.thebridge-online.org



Growing in Hope - Central States Synod, ELCA 2018

From Our Synod's Area Ministry 4 (North Central Kansas)

There are three Clergy that share Worship responsibility at the local Hospital, and the Long Term Care wing. Maundy Thursday was my Holy Week Service, so after contacting the other Clergy we held a joint service around a table, talked and read the scriptures including John's telling of Jesus washing of the disciples feet. Since most residents are wheel chair bound, a Eucharist Minister from the Roman Catholic Church and I washed and blessed the residents hands. Then we read the scripture about Jesus institution of what we know as Holy Communion, and shared Communion around the table. Those who belong to the LCMS were offered a Blessing. While it was parallel communion, not truly joint, since there are still differences between ELCA and Roman Catholic belief, which were not completely resolved in The Declaration on the Way Joint Statements, it was a step in unity and love within the small community. The residents and staff stated it was "very meaningful and wanted to know when we could do it again". The local Priest had planned on being there but had a parish emergency, so he sent a Eucharist Minister who afterwards stated " We are all one family in Christ and we need to share worship more!" Even though we live in a small community it was a small step of Christian Unity, and hopefully a sign that we will be open to more sharing and joint worship experiences.

The Rev. Pastor Donna Florio, Hanover

From Our Synod's Area Ministry 5 (South Central Kansas)



The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation was commemorated at the "Listening for Peace" event. This was the first in a series of ecumenical gatherings held on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving at **St. Mary's Cathedral** in Wichita.

Clergy from Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Episcopal and United Methodist churches gave meditations, shared scripture, prayers and songs during the service. A time of conversation followed among those who were gathered.

Pastor Elizabeth Cummings from **Resurrection, Haysville** gave one of the meditations, Pastor Dave Fulton from **St. Paul's, Wichita** introduced the program and Bishop Roger Gustafson also participated. Pastor Mari Larson of **Reformation, Wichita** was involved in the planning and hosted the second gathering.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Cummings - Area Ministry 5 Dean

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From Our Synod's Area Ministry 9 (Mid-Missouri)

God's Story: Our Voices – Area 9

Each of the congregations in Area 9 have a distinct voice and their own story of God to tell – not only in their congregation, but in their town and in this world. To tell all of our stories, even just from this past year, would take pages and pages. So, let us tell two stories of what happens when all of our congregations work together.



For decades, the congregations in Area 9 have put together their voices and their resources to provide a summer camp for youth in grades 4 – 9, because our synod's great camp is quite a distance away. So together, pastors, youth leaders, parents, volunteers, and more spend a week at Lake of the Ozarks State Park exploring the story of God in each of the camper's lives and encouraging those campers to live out and share God's story in all they do the rest of the year. Last summer, they explored the theme "Fingerprints – Our Mark on God's Creation." This summer they plan to gather again to spend time in God's creation and find themselves in the midst of God's story.

For the past three years, in an effort to find some intentional time to explore the story of God in our lives, we have come together for a day-long event which we call "The Gathering." The Gathering has happened in Cole Camp, Missouri, inviting speakers and guests to come and share their stories with us as we take part in worship, fellowship, service, fun and more. Last year's speaker was The Rev. Peder Johanson, a pastor serving near Madison, WI, who is a member of the Network of Biblical Storytellers. We spent the day hearing God's story in the way they were originally heard: orally. Throughout the day we invited one another to see where we were in God's story, and were encouraged to go from that place living and telling that story. We are looking forward to this year's Gathering in the fall!



The Rev.'s Stephen Zeller and Kimberly Knowle Zeller Co-Deans Area Ministry 9

From Our Synod's Mission Congregations

The Gathering Table, Kansas City

The Gathering Table formed January 1, 2018 as an ELCA Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC) in a neighborhood of extreme poverty, crime, broken families, refugees, and people with disabilities. The mission of our community is to follow Jesus' example of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, forming relationships with "others." We differ from a helping agency as we also preach and teach the Gospel and share sacraments with everyone.

The former church at this site was closed due to lack of lay leadership and from this a SAWC was formed. With new enthusiasm The Gathering Table initiated a Wednesday coffee shop, social worker led support groups, tomato garden, shower and dressing room, a second food manager, expanded VBS to eight weeks, and extended volunteer opportunities. Fifty neighborhood people worship each week and seventeen attend Wednesday bible study. Annually six thousand nutritious meals are prepared and twelve thousand articles of clothing distributed. The Central States Synod owns the building, partner congregations and neighborhood agencies support us, and we continue to build God's kingdom in a unique, perhaps risky, environment. Recently we invited two congregations to worship in the building: refugees from Mexico and the Congo. Each of these congregations add to the life of our neighborhood and personal relationship with God in the bigger world.



This is a community of people "doing WITH" one another rather than simply doing for others. Neighborhood volunteers are very willing to tell their stories; prepare nutritious meals; serve as resource guides, musicians, and worship leaders; clean the building; and host as personal shoppers. Leaders emerge who never had such opportunities, which has led to discipleship and job placements.



Please support this unique ministry in a very unique location with unique people of God.

The Rev. Ann Rundquist, Mission Developer

¹In 2017 the FBI named this neighborhood the second most dangerous in the USA.

From Our Synod's Mission Congregations

South Sudanese Congregation @ First Lutheran Church, St. Joseph



The Central States Synod's South Sudanese Congregation held our first prayer service on April 01, 2007. Our background was in the Episcopal Church. Realizing that we are all believers in one God, we asked the Synod if we would be able to be Lutheran, and the Bishop agreed. In 2017, we became part of the ELCA. Since we came here, we have faced struggle and change. We still lack many things and need help from different partners and congregations.

We are privileged to call upon God for spiritual and mission awareness in order to make this congregation a place where the gospel of Christ is preached. We need to cultivate Godly vision in the life of this congregation and the whole entire community by "building, transforming, and renewing families through the Word of God." God has called us to transform, equip and mobilized all believers to fulfill the mission of the kingdom of God.

In Jesus' love, we are freed to serve our neighbors in love. We all share a commitment to spreading God's word and sharing God's love in the world. Spiritual Growth is essential to our relationship with our Lord, as well as our desire to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ and to share the faith with others. We believe in God as Jesus instructed us "Ask and will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be open to you" (Luke 11:9 NIV). South Sudanese Congregation is a reminder of your commitment to the Lord to evangelize and strengthen the body of Christ.



Thank you all
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From Our Congregations

Trinity Lutheran Church of Topeka

"Here in this place the new light is streaming, now is the darkness vanished away;"

The words of this beloved hymn "Gather Us In" are resonating with Trinity Lutheran Church of Topeka. We are yet again embarking on a path with renewed leadership on church council, renewed commitment of members and renewed hope as we are waiting to interview and call a new part time pastor. We are choosing to have God vanish our darkness.

"See in this space our fears and our dreamings brought here to you in the light of this day. "

We have spent much time asking God to show us who we have been, who we are, and who we can grow to serve. Although we are small, we are hopeful, excited and waiting for God's movement.

"Gather us in, the lost and forsaken, gather us in, the blind and the lame;"

As we have many more members in the second half of life rather than the first, we do sometimes feel lost and forsaken, blind and lame. But we wait and listen, hope and pray that God will send to us everything we need to move forward to be God's hands in our world.

"Call to us now, and we shall awaken, we shall arise at the sound of our name."

Amen. Let it be so, Oh Great and Loving God, let it be so. Amen and amen.

Hillside Community Lutheran Church, Spring Hill – Congregational Vitality

It has been 4 years since the Synod Council recognized a New Start Congregation called Hillside Community Lutheran Church in Spring Hill, KS at the Synod Assembly - 2014. Through the value of having deep spiritual conversations in Coaching Covenants with **ELCA Coaches***, I (Pastor Janice Hawley) can see how the Spirit has used those times to help me learn which Pastor-led actions to best take and NOT take in alignment with overall goals for building up a new congregation in the body of Christ. Hillside Community is working together to stand on their own two feet financially and then shifting into new strategic goals and practices to move forward with identified community goals.



The Members and Friends of Hillside Community took part in the Congregational Vitality Study in December 2017. We are celebrating being seen as a very Vital Congregation (4.4 out of a 5-scale). With Sustainability level at a 3.0, we want to get stronger and are energized to work out how to talk with each other more about what is valued about Hillside Community as our Church and why we are increasing our financial giving and investment to the Mission of God... "connecting people to build the community as engaged followers of Jesus Christ!"

Currently, we are having 5 Sundays of lay leaders & families sharing their own stories in Worship and are identifying a few key Mentors to share their own individual personal stories with other families about personal budgeting, as faithful stewards to gratefully giving more back to God.

Hillside Community was blessed and wants to thank the CSS for the many ways Synod supported us with being a site for the Survey and having Rev. Susan Candea, Director for Evangelical Mission, help us make sense out of the reports. Then she facilitated action plans to come out of our community's Lenten 'Caring Conversations' which were facilitated by our Council President and Secretary. I am grateful for Coaching and the useful tools to help Hillside Community grow stronger!

***A Coach is someone who chooses to invest what they have been given to accelerate someone else's development or accomplishment by asking powerful questions. (from "Coaching Hacks" by Jonathan Reitz, 2017)**

From Our Synod's Mission Congregations

Partners (Mision San Juan de Dios), Wichita Sweet 15th celebration

Sweet 15th is a very popular celebration in the Latino population. Most families, when a girl becomes 15 years old, come together as family and friends. They cover all expenses. It is like a wedding – a big party.

As a Mision we have been asked to host this kind of celebration. This is a blessing for us – the opportunity to evangelize and share people's joy. It is really big for the girl, the family and us as a Mision. Just two weeks ago we had one for Diana, who has received the sacraments of baptism and communion with us. She is a member of our church. I was so happy when she asked me to perform her celebration. Our church was full of people. Her parents received Holy Communion and everybody was so respectful at church.

I pray that God will always give us the opportunity to be here and present for people, not just at times of joy but also when they need assistance in other matters, like immigration issues.

For example, it was just the other day that one of our members was caught by ICE and I was able to give him a letter of reference that helped him. He was released with bail after one month.

The Rev. Ivan Gonzalez



Iglesia Sagrado Corazon, ELCA, Garden City Dino Niño, PCUSA-ELCA, Dodge City

We are evangelized and evangelizing congregations. We work by sowing the love of God to the future leaders who are our children. Our community works selling food periodically to sustain the mission. Also our brothers and sisters work in the remodeling, construction and maintenance of our building.

Our Bishop Roger and Pastor Donna Simon and their team give us all their love and support. It is wonderful to work with our Bishop. Without the support of our Synod it would be more difficult for us to walk since we are a community rejected by the unjust laws that force us to walk in the shadows of hatred and racism, of poverty and pain.

Our congregation has hope in the midst of uncertainty, strength in the midst of weakness, happiness in the midst of pain and family in the midst of diversity. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ calls us and sends us to announce the good news of his kingdom and to denounce personal, social and structural sin. We are not indifferent to the challenges that overwhelm our people, therefore just like Jesus Christ we seek justice and freedom through the gospel.

We are a rejected and loved community - light in the dark - happy in pain - we give from our poverty and serve with love.
GOD BLESS YOU.

The Rev. Odir Flores– Canales

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From Our Synod's Mission Congregations

Immanuel Oromo Lutheran Church @ Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Kansas City

Dear beloved Lutherans. The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

We are an ethnic specific, language specific bridge ministry created out of the need of the Oromo Speaking Ethiopian immigrants who are continually growing in number. This community of new generation Ethiopians is different from the earlier immigrants. They only understand the Oromo language because of the ethnic freedom that comes with the fall of the former system of government. They cannot join the existing Ethiopian Churches.

This ministry serves as a bridge in sharing the burdens of these newer immigrants in adapting and assimilating while keeping their faith. We also evangelize those who have not heard the gospel before. We are a ministry that uses the life experiences of those of us who have been here longer to help the newer family's kids go through the hardship of getting used to the school system in their new country. We train our members how to drive and gain driver's licenses and we are their interpreters at appointments.

We do these things while living through our own already existing social and regional strife which splits us into so many smaller groups. It is quite hard. But the gospel works and we must preach. And God is awesome in interfering with actions that He alone can do, such as the recent excellent change in the Ethiopian political leadership, which caused a historic level of unity among our people. I am hopeful that this spirit of unity will spill over onto the ministry of the gospel.

At this time, we have an ordained minister through the ELCA TEEM program thanks to the ELCA scholarship as well as CSS support. We have two Bible Study groups meeting weekly. Children's Bible Study and music lessons were stopped for the last three months for reasons of school work amount but is now resuming. Gloria Dei Lutheran Church has been requested to assist us in tutoring our children with homework. We are hoping families that will increase our membership will make it through the immigration process and come to join us. It is our plan to invest in assisting new migrants who have gained legal right to come but have no one to sponsor them.

Our Oromo Christian Ministries on world wide web is still going on even though the recent Ethiopian political earthquake which mostly went on face book has stolen attendance from us. We believe we will regain attendance now that things are calming down for the good, thanks be to God.

We are praying and knocking on doors to grow in numbers. We are also praying for ministry partners who will fill in financial shortage in supporting the mission. I invite individuals as well as congregations whose hearts are burning for mission to partner with us.

Please pray for me as I fly to Tanzania with the ELCA African National's Teem to learn from, as well as to reconnect our church with African Lutherans to do ministry better. I will then return through Ethiopia, spending a short time with relatives and family. God's blessings as we spread His Love in Christ the Savior of the world.

The Rev. Melaku Tizazu

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