



## Summary of the 2026 Central States Synod Assembly

The Central States Synod Assembly took place online, June 6, 2026. The theme was Life Together, based on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book of the same name. Synod staff conducted a book study of Bonhoeffer's work in the weeks leading up to the assembly, and the assembly was structured following the chapters of the book, **Community**, **The Day Together**, **The Day Alone**, **Service/Ministry**, and **Confession and Communion**.

### Community -

Our day began with worship, led by Bishop Simon and Assembly Chaplain, Rev. Christyn Koschmann. The Gospel of the day was Matthew 18:18-20

<sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Notably, this was presented as a Visio Divina.

Following welcome and introductions, Bishop Simon called upon Rich Gates to present the proposed constitutional changes to the assembly. Rich served as a synod voting member to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly and was able to summarize the process and purposes of the proposed changes. All of the recommended changes passed with no further amendments.

### The Day Together -

Synod Vice President Nancy Nagel offered her [report](#), and highlighted the work of the Synod Council. This included recognizing the transition to a new bishop, continued budgetary streamlining, new sources of revenue, and the council's work to carry out the actions of the 2025 synod assembly. She reminded us that we work in God's time and will take care to discern what plans God has for the synod. Nancy quoted Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "We are not simply to bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself." going on to share many of the ways that we as a synod are addressing injustice in our neighborhoods and communities.

Rev. Kris Dietzen, Co-Dean of the Border Conference presented the nominations report including the following nominations;

Synod Council Secretary - Alesia Roccia

Border Conference Representative - Rev. Edd Wunderlich

Central Kansas Conference Representative - Julie Barstow

With no additional nominations brought forward from the floor, these three were later elected to serve on the synod council.

Rev. Adam Wutka, Director of Lay Ministry shared a brief message and recognized several newly certified Parish Ministry Associates (PMAs), Lori Post, Becky Kiel, Dyke Kiel, and Duane Lentz. This was followed by a celebration of PMAs marking milestone anniversaries in 2026.

Adam DeHoek, PhD. - Senior Director for Research and Evaluation at the ELCA served as our churchwide representative and joined the assembly to share the [ELCA report](#) and video greeting from Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry. This report focused on the connectedness of the church from congregation to synod, and churchwide. He took time also to acknowledge that we are living in times of divisiveness, anger, and fear. "During his ministry on earth Jesus gave us the commandment: 'Love one another.' Today, it seems difficult to love one another when we struggle to even communicate." A prayer was offered up for God's guidance and peace.

Recognizing the unique opportunity, Bishop Simon asked Dr. DeHoek to share with the assembly an overview of the [ELCA's Research and Evaluation](#) office. This report explained the purpose and application of data collected, with guidance for interpretation.

## The Day Alone -

The final session of our morning together brought us [Bishop Simon's report \(video\)](#) in which she addressed the question, "What does the Synod do?" Bishop Simon not only outlined the role and tasks assigned to a synod of the ELCA, but also her goals specifically for the Central States Synod. Those goals include additional training for rostered ministers, better support for youth and young adults across the synod, and finding new ways being church. Ultimately posing the question, "What if we became known as the people who introduced every person in Kansas and Missouri to the love of God in Christ? What if in a few years there are scholars studying our ministries, and writing books about Learning from Missouri and Kansas?!"

During our lunch break, voting members were given the opportunity to join small group breakout rooms to meet with a variety of our ministry partners and hear more about their efforts and to discover how they and their congregation might become involved.

## Service/Ministry -

Our afternoon began with Scott Schulte giving the Treasurer's report and the synod council's proposed budget. The budget predominantly followed precedent with one exception. Mission Support from the Central States Synod to the ELCA will be reduced from 50% to 48% of the total mission support received by the synod. Following a brief discussion and questions from voting members, the budget passed without amendment.

Rev. Chad Langdon, Associate to the Bishop, stepped forward to present the recommended Compensation Guidelines for 2027. Those guidelines reflect a 2.9% cost of living increase, but are otherwise unchanged. Those guidelines passed and will go into effect January 1, 2027.

Rev. Langdon took an additional moment to promote a series of discernment events that he is hosting across the synod. These weekend events are designed for anyone who may feel a gentle nudge from the Holy Spirit to explore ministry in any capacity (lay, ordained or somewhere in between). Participants will have a chance to learn about the many different options, ask questions, and spend time in prayer thinking about God's call on their life.

Director of Evangelical Mission, Rev. Kristen Koch next took the microphone to share how the synod is adapting to a changing church. This includes new models of ministry and her two goals. One, that each of us feels equipped to listen, to God, our congregation, and our neighbors and two, the we each practice telling the story of God's activity in our lives.

She also took time to review the work of the New Start Task Force that came to be through an action of the 2025 synod assembly. Ultimately, we need to raise up leaders with the gifts for ministry exploration. In the meantime, we have funding currently to launch one new start. The task force recommends that take place in Maize, Kansas.

### Confession and Communion -

The final part of our day together focused on the resolutions submitted for the assembly's consideration.

SA26.A - Celebrate Global and Companion Synod Ministry

SA26.B - Act for Climate Justice

SA26.C - Affirm People of God of All Gender Identities

SA26.D - Give Thanks for Concluded Stages of Ministry

Each of these resolutions were adopted by the assembly. The recommendations of SA26.A were slightly amended for clarity with no change to the intent or purpose.

Throughout our day together, voting members heard messages from the ministries of the Central States Synod, and viewed videos celebrating our rostered leaders and congregations that marked milestone anniversaries during 2026.

Bishop Simon concluded our day with these words:

*Jesus said, You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. I chose you and appointed you to bear fruit that will last. Remember, I will be with you always, to the end of time. Direct us, O Lord God, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and extend to us your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name; and finally, by your mercy, bring us to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*