

## Central States Women Gather in Cluster Events

### President's Message



I hope that each of you have had an exciting spring and that the many storms that just seem to keep coming have avoided

you and yours. I pray that you will have a relaxing summer with your families and that you will take time to count the many blessings that are received daily from our Lord. As you do this, look for ways in which you can be a blessing to others.

The Central States Women of the ELCA is now organized into 5 clusters that coincide with the conference boundaries of the Central States Synod. We have transitioned from an annual convention to a biennial convention to be held in odd-numbered years. In the even-numbered years each cluster will hold an event in a central location. These events are well underway and are proving to be a success with



good attendance and positive comments as women gather for worship, study, and conversation.

Each cluster is using the theme “Just Love” for their 2024 gathering. The Eastern Missouri and Border Clusters met in April 2024. Both were most successful with some women attending who had not previously attended Women of the ELCA events. The Osage Cluster met on June 1<sup>st</sup> and enjoyed a day of activities and meeting new sisters in Christ! Be sure to read other articles in this issue that give details about the events that have occurred.

The Western Kansas Cluster is meeting August 24<sup>th</sup> at Trinity Lutheran in Hays, KS. The Central Kansas Cluster will hold a retreat October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> in Lindsborg, KS. Much thanks goes to the cluster coordinators and board member liaisons who have worked diligently to create these meaningful events.

Next year being an odd-numbered year, we will hold our 36<sup>th</sup> Synodical Organization Convention. The convention will be held June 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Independence, MO. “Vessels of God’s Grace” will be the convention’s theme, based on Ephesians 2:8. Mark your calendars now to attend!!

*Submitted by Gloria Sharp, president*

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*“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*

## ***Women Gather in Cole Camp for Osage Cluster Event***

It was an excited and enthusiastic group of women who left the first Osage Cluster meeting on Saturday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, held at St. Paul's Lutheran in Cole Camp, MO. Forty-two ladies from congregations in the cluster attended. Throughout the morning and early afternoon, they engaged in prayer, hymn singing, Bible study, and conversation.

Retired Pastor Sandy Schlesselman led a Bible study focused on the day's theme of "Just Love". The group studied the four types of love as related to the Greek language. The discussion centered on *agape* love—the highest form of love that embodies selflessness, sacrifice, and unconditional care for others, transcending mere feelings, but emphasizing actions and commitment.

In the afternoon, former Pastor and now a Spiritual Director, Katherine Hayes-Wallenburg, brought information regarding the concept of spiritual direction. Spiritual direction is the practice of being with people as they attempt to deepen their relationship with the divine, or to learn and grow in their personal spirituality. It is a concept designed to allow the Holy Spirit to discern how God is working in and around each of us.

The ladies engaged in a 'mixer' during lunch, which provided an opportunity to join in conversation with ladies from units other than their own. A generous offering was collected which will be divided between the Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Fund and Women of the ELCA churchwide organization. The goal for the day was achieved as women formed new friendships and learned what other congregational units are doing as they serve within their congregations and communities.

*Submitted by Janice Gerken, board officer*



**Women of the Osage Cluster  
Gathered at St. Paul's Lutheran, Cole Camp, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024**

### **TAKE NOTE...WOMEN OF CENTRAL KANSAS CLUSTER**

Women of the Central Kansas Cluster will meet in retreat October 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 in Lindsborg, KS.

There will be no registration fee. The offering will go to the Dala Pantry at Messiah Lutheran Church, Lindsborg. Be watching for an e-mail from Ruth Ann Zenger giving instructions to RSVP by phone or e-mail.

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## *Women of Eastern Missouri Cluster Gather at Good Shepherd Lutheran*



Women of the Eastern Missouri Cluster  
Gathered at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Manchester, MO, on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Close to 50 women from throughout the Eastern Missouri Cluster gathered on a beautiful day in April at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Manchester, MO, to celebrate love and share in fellowship. Participants were welcomed by Wilma Prifti, cluster co-coordinator, and Kim Sherwood, one of the hosts from Good Shepherd. Everyone enjoyed a bountiful continental breakfast, meeting new friends from throughout the cluster due to randomly assigned seats. Women shared items brought from home as a 'show and tell' to introduce themselves.

The Rev. Kimberly Knowle-Zeller led Bible study and discussion of familiar readings from the gospels of Luke and Mark through a lens of love. Participants reflected on the importance of sharing God's love with simple acts of grace, service, and hospitality. While enjoying a salad luncheon and dessert, the following spoke.

- Sue Davis, a volunteer with the St. Louis nonprofit, *Home Sweet Home*, shared the organization's mission of providing clients who are transitioning into new living situations, furniture and household items.
- Board member, Gaye Mizell, explained the Central States Synodical Women's Education Scholarship Fund, which was established to support women in Kansas and Missouri pursuing post-secondary education.
- Kathy Steinke, vice president, encouraged all women to attend the 36<sup>th</sup> Central States Synodical Women's Convention to be held June 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Independence, MO.
- Wilma Prifti invited women to provide input regarding future events and to stay connected through *Walking in the Word*.

The day concluded with Holy Communion celebrated by Pastor Knowle-Zeller. The offerings collected were divided between *Home Sweet Home* and the Education Scholarship Fund. Thanks go to Vicki Haugen and the team of All Anew women at Good Shepherd for extending love through their warm hospitality.

*Submitted by Kathy Steinke, board officer*

**WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR UNITS AND CLUSTERS?**  
Linda Lockhart, our Facebook administrator, wants to post about your activities and events. Contact Linda at [lockhartls92@gmail.com](mailto:lockhartls92@gmail.com) with a short description of your activity or event. She likes pictures!

## Women of the Border Cluster Gather in Atchison, KS

“Just Love—Hope and Renewal” was the theme for the joyful cluster event held on April 27th at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Atchison, KS. Thirty-six women from seven congregations attended the half-day event. The morning began with a buffet of luscious baked goodies, fruit, and beverages. The tables contributed to the cheerful atmosphere with varied colored tablecloths and fresh flowers. Rev Dinah Dutta led the opening devotion, concluding the devotion time with the singing of “All Things Bright and Beautiful”.

Brenda Bass, member of First Lutheran, St. Joseph, MO, and master gardener, led the Bible study, “Grounded and Growing in Gratitude”. Attendees were generous in giving of their offerings and ingatherings. One-half of the offering and all the ingathering were contributed to Atchison County Food Bank and one-half of the offering went to the Central States Synodical Organization Education Scholarship Fund. Four huge boxes of non-perishable food items were donated along with the offering of \$372.

In light of the theme, each woman received small bags of marigold seeds and marigold plants, and Solomon’s seal plants were shared. Each is a symbol of hope and renewal in the love we are called to share with others.

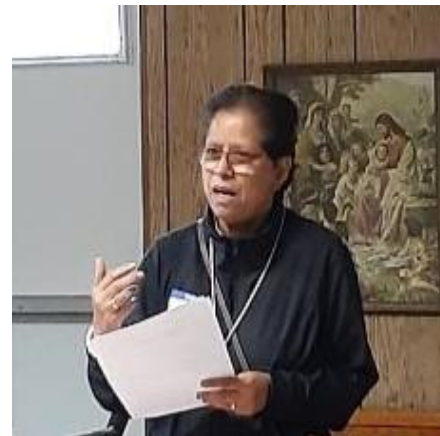
Save-the-date information was shared for the 2025 convention along with information about how to access the churchwide website and synodical organization web page. Attendees were encouraged to subscribe to *Walking in the Word*.

Thanks are extended to Border Cluster Co-coordinators, Carol Bunge and Ruth Hanshaw, for their work to make “Just Love—Hope and Renewal” a success.

*Submitted by Louise Ahrens, board member*



(L to R) Ruth Hanshaw, cluster co-coordinator, Rev Dinah Dutta, board member, Pat Dunavan, board member, Carol Bunge, cluster co-coordinator, Louise Ahrens, board member



Rev Dutta leads opening devotion



Women from the Hosanna! Lutheran Active Unit (L to R) Karen Orrill, Sue Tonks, Marty Berggren, Angelika Schmitt, Donna Mason and Louise Ahrens



## Moving Forward...

We knew that 2024 would be an exciting year with new beginnings as our newly formed clusters were organized across Kansas and Missouri. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, two clusters held successful events. The Eastern Missouri Cluster met in Manchester, MO, and the Border Cluster held their event in Atchison, KS. I was privileged to attend the Border Cluster event. The women of the Osage Cluster gathered in Cole Camp, MO, on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Be sure to read about the details of these events elsewhere in this issue.

In August, the Western Kansas cluster will be hosting their event in Hays, KS. Details for this event will be sent directly to the congregations in that cluster. Plans are being made for an inspiring time together. Last, but not least, the Central Kansas cluster is planning an overnight event October 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> in Lindsborg, KS. Contact information for the co-coordinators planning this event is elsewhere in this issue. Reach out to them for more information.

With successful inaugural cluster events behind us and planning progressing for those happening in the fall, the Board is asking: "Where do we go from here"? We've noted elsewhere in this issue that our synodical convention will be held in June 2025. But between now and then there are opportunities to stay connected within your cluster.

- Consider hosting an additional cluster event. Attendees have asked for the opportunity to gather again. The cluster coordinators are ready to assist you in planning.
- Consider sending out mailings or e-mails to the congregational units in your cluster, sharing information about projects or ways that your unit is making a difference in your community and the world.
- Invite ladies from other churches in your community to events—maybe Bible studies or service activities that your unit is hosting.
- Share via e-mail or 'snail' mail the activities of your unit or cluster. You may inspire other women or units to do something similar. Your cluster coordinator can assist you with posting information on our synodical organization's web page or putting information in *Walking in the Word*.
- Pray for all women in your cluster and across the Central States Synod.

*Submitted by Pat Dunavan, board member*



### Scholarship Fund Named in Honor of Lynn Starr

Earlier this year, Lynn Starr, the first president of our Central States Women of the ELCA, passed away. In 1987, Lynn was instrumental in getting our synodical organization off to a good beginning. Lynn was Spirit-led and very organized as she served with grace, compassion, and love. She was a mentor to many and active in the congregational unit at Messiah in Springfield, MO, until the time of her passing.

The Board, at their May meeting, voted to rename the Education Scholarship Fund the Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Fund in honor of Lynn. The Board also voted to give \$500 to the fund in Lynn's memory and to request congregational units consider making a contribution to the fund in memory of Lynn.

These gifts may be sent to Janice Gerken, Treasurer, at 36282 Renken Road, Mora, MO, 65345. Please make checks payable to Central States Women of the ELCA and designate on the memo line that the gift is for the Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Fund. Let's honor Lynn by making a contribution.

*Submitted by Gloria Sharp, president*



## *New Life in Service*

Living on a farm, I am in a unique position to observe the new life that comes with arrival of spring. Such as: the blooming of daffodils, the greening of the pastures, the first hummingbirds, and of course, the spring calves. Calves arrive in this world wide-eyed and a bit wobbly, but fueled with their mother's milk they are soon frisking across the pasture. Such wonderment!

At baptism, we are given new life being reborn as children of God. Fueled with the Holy Spirit, our faith grows and strengthens, enabling us to discern God's will. Because we are transformed by God's free gift of love and grace, the natural response for Christians is to serve and love others.

We, as bold Women of the ELCA, are empowered to answer the call of the Holy Spirit to serve within our congregations, our communities, and beyond. Women find themselves often in a constant state of engagement and involvement. They step forward to serve luncheons and soup suppers; organize socials, bazaars and teas; serve in various capacities of worship; and provide assistance to local service agencies.

Our service also extends beyond our local units and communities with the making of quilts and diapers, collecting items for personal care, school, and sewing kits, and delivering those items to drop-off points for Lutheran World Relief. Through our monetary donations, we serve many in times of disaster and assist with missions throughout the world.

With the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, the gift of grace, and answering God's call, the bold Women of the ELCA step out in the highest form of stewardship—giving back to God what he has given us by serving and witnessing God's love and grace to our neighbors. Thanks be to God!

*Submitted by Janice Gerken, board officer*



## *Going with the Gospel*

Lutheran women have long been proponents of living out the gospel of Christ. We tend to preach the gospel and if necessary we use words. In consideration of that, let's begin to think 'gospel oriented' in our mission of providing for those whose lives are challenged by adversities.

Now is the time churches begin planning for various local humanitarian missions. I want to challenge each to think of that mission work from the standpoint of equity and dignity.

For example, churches are often involved in food drives to fill local food pantries, or clothing drives to provide clothing for those in need. Sometimes our best intentions actually bring about a feeling of inequity. At times I choose to shop at thrift stores. That is my choice. If I purchase a gently used article of clothing or a used appliance, that again is my choice. When we collect items to be distributed to those in need, whether it be food, clothing, or appliances, the one question we need to ask ourselves is "Am I providing for the dignity of the person who will receive this?"

*(continued on page 7)*

### *Seeking Walking in the Word Editor*

Do you or do you know someone who has an interest in serving as editor of this newsletter, *Walking in the Word*?

As we endeavor to maintain ongoing contact with women across the Central States Synod, we view this publication as the most critical mode of communication. If you are interested or know of someone, please contact Gloria Sharp, President, at 573-462-9758 or [gissharp@aol.com](mailto:gissharp@aol.com).

## Celebrating 2023 Ingatherings...

~Looking back—we celebrate the good work of 2023~

- **Christ Lutheran, Wichita ingathering**  
737 quilts, 312 school kits, 72 personal care kits, 79 baby kits, and 22 fabric kits
- **Our Savior's, Jefferson City ingathering**  
729 quilts, 427 school kits, 376 personal care kits, 174 baby kits, and 15 fabric kits
- **St. John's, Salina ingathering**  
1,111 quilts, 1,013 school kits, 895 personal care kits, 423 baby kits, and 20 fabric kits
- **St. Mark's/Shepherd of the Hills, Greater St. Louis ingathering**  
682 quilts, 452 school kits, 293 personal care kits, 54 baby care kits, and 76 fabric kits  
Information not available for Hays, KS ingathering



## LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

## ...Working toward 2024 Ingatherings

~Looking forward—to celebrating the good work of 2024~

- **October 19** Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran  
St. Ann, MO 9 am – 12 noon
- **October 19** Our Savior's Lutheran  
Jefferson City, MO 9 am – 1pm
- **October 22** Christ Lutheran  
Wichita, KS
- **October 23** Trinity Lutheran  
Hays, KS
- **October 24** St. John's Lutheran  
Salina, KS

## Going with the Gospel *(continued from page 6)*

For the past 20 years the church I serve has collected and provided coats and blankets at no cost to those in need. We ask for new or gently used items from the community. We have always been appreciative and amazed by the donations we receive; however, we've also had to dispose of many items because they were not fit for distribution. That leaves us feeling empty...we must strive to always provide for the dignity of all.

The same can be said for food collected. Expired or food items requiring multiple added ingredients or food that is not flavorful should not be donated.

All of this has one thing in common—dignity. When we strive for equity we should remember the dignity of each person who has the potential to receive the items. Let us all commit to living out the gospel of Christ with equity and dignity for all.

*Submitted by Pastor Jill Duis, board member*

## ~Mark Your Calendars Now~

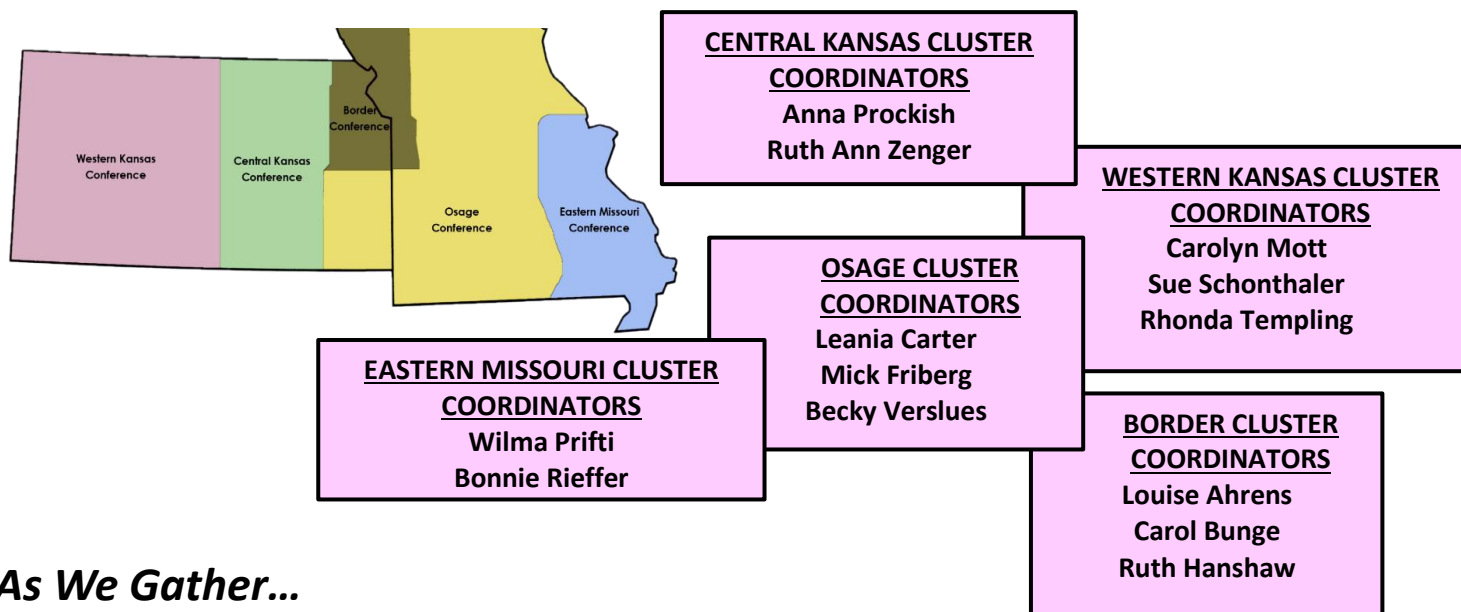
### Central States Synodical Organization Women of the ELCA Convention

June 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025  
Hilton Garden Inn  
Independence, Missouri

### 13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Gathering Women of the ELCA

July 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> 2026  
Des Moines, Iowa

## Thanks to Our Cluster Coordinators



## As We Gather...

We are thankful for the success of the recent cluster events and know those that will happen in the fall will likewise bring women together in central and western Kansas. This success promises to lay the groundwork for a most successful synodical organization convention in June 2025.

We are thankful for the bold women who have gone before us and now we need you to ‘step out’ and ‘step up’ to continue the good work of the Women of the ELCA.

Please prayerfully consider becoming a synodical organization officer or board member. We have four currently serving on the board who will not be eligible to run for office when elections take place at next year’s convention. At that convention we will also be electing voting members to the 13<sup>th</sup> Triennial Gathering which will be held in 2026 in Des Moines, IA.

I challenge you to:

- PRAY, PRAY, PRAY for Women of the ELCA at all levels—congregational, synodical, and churchwide.
- Lift up your sisters in Christ and tell them ‘thank-you’ for a job well done.
- Participate at all levels—congregational, synodical, and churchwide. You will be blest.
- Introduce someone in your congregation to Women of the ELCA.
- Say “yes” when asked to ‘step out’ and ‘step up’ to a leadership role.

I am praying the Holy Spirit will come to you and show you the way.

Submitted by Susie Borgstrom, board officer

## Churchwide Leadership Event

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, Gloria Sharp and Louise Ahrens, along with hundreds of women throughout the country, attended a churchwide-sponsored event, *Servant Leader: Present, Equipped, Here*, via Zoom.

Presenters included Valora Starr, Director of Discipleship, Women of the ELCA; Stacy Kitahata, Co-Director of Holden Village; The Rev Anna-Kari Johnson, Associate Director of Congregational Vitality for the ELCA; and President, Women of the ELCA, Myrna Wells-Ulland.

There were three sessions:

- *Servant Leader—Present* based on Romans 12: 4-6, 8. The focus of the discussion was on being ‘fully present’ to others. Even as individuals, we must remember we belong to each other.
- *Servant Leader—Equipped* based on 1 Corinthians 12: 1, 4-11. The focus was on the importance of equipping others at the unit level with the hope they will move forward to synodical and even national level leadership.
- *Servant Leader—Here* based on Ephesians 4: 1-14. Here the richness of community was discussed with the reminder of the importance of being open to the Holy Spirit’s guidance in following spiritual gifts.

Each person was encouraged to complete the spiritual gifts assessment available on the WELCA website.

<https://www.womenoftheelca.org/filebin/pdf/resources/SpiritualGifts.pdf>

Submitted by Louis Ahrens, board member

“Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?”



# *Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Fund Recipients*



**Elise Gover**  
Emanuel Lutheran, Hutchinson, KS  
Hutchinson Community College  
Hutchinson, KS



**Emma Schmidt**  
Hosanna! Lutheran, Liberty, MO  
Northwest Missouri State University  
Maryville, MO



**Darby Parks**  
Gloria Dei Lutheran, Wichita, KS  
Wichita State University  
Wichita, KS



**Alyssa Fowler**  
St. Paul's Lutheran, Cole Camp, MO  
Belmont University  
Nashville, TN

## ***Congratulations to 2024 Recipients***



**Abigail Gonzalez**  
St. Paul's Lutheran, Lohman, MO  
State Technical College of Missouri  
Linn, MO

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

#### **Our Mission**

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

#### **Our Purpose**

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