

Planning Underway for 2025 Convention

President's Message



It's hard to believe it's time to begin thinking about preparation for the holidays! As I think of Thanksgiving, I always think about the Sunday before, as that is when my

congregational unit celebrates Thankoffering Sunday. The women at Our Savior's often lead most of the worship service, during which we bring our Thankofferings forward in thanksgiving for all the blessings God has bestowed upon us during the year. Does your unit have a Thankoffering celebration? There is a service available at [Thankofferings - Women of the ELCA](#) if you are interested in having a Thankoffering service.

As you are aware, we did not have a convention this year. Instead, each cluster hosted a cluster event—all of which were most successful. Now it is time to begin preparing for our next convention, June 20-22, in Independence, MO. The Board met recently to begin planning for the convention. We left the meeting excited and ready to explore the suggestions and ideas presented.



Central States Synodical Organization Board
(Back Row L to R)
Louise Ahrens, Kathy Steinke, Janice Gerken, Gaye Mizell
(Front Row L to R)
Gloria Sharp, Pat Dunavan, Susie Borgstrom
(Virtual)
Jill Duis, Rev Dinah Dutta

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Kathy Steinke, shares more information about the convention in this issue.

Also in this issue of *Walking in the Word*, you will find the application for the Lynn Starr Education Scholarship. Any female member of an ELCA congregation, who will be seeking post-high school education, is eligible to apply, unless previously awarded a scholarship from this fund.

The Central States women have received an invitation for a possible exchange of visits between our women and the women's group from the Kote District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea. See Pat Dunavan's article in this issue for more details.

Please consider serving on our Central States Synodical Organization Board. We have several women who will be finishing their terms in 2025. If you are interested, please contact me at gjs-sharp@aol.com.

I hope that all women of the Central States will begin making plans to attend our 36th convention in June 2025. Be watching for the convention registration packet that will be mailed to each congregation early in the spring. I look forward to seeing many friends and making new friends. One of my many blessings certainly includes all my Women of the ELCA friendships!

Submitted by Gloria Sharp, president

Women Gather in Lindsborg for Central Kansas Cluster Event

Amid the beautiful fall foliage of the Bethany College campus and steeped in the rich Swedish tradition of Messiah and Bethany Lutheran Churches, Lutheran women gathered October 18 and 19 for fellowship, Bible study, worship, sharing of ideas and a whole lot of fun!

The gathering began by exploring the many quaint and heritage-rich shops in Lindsborg. Women were encouraged to immerse themselves in the rich Swedish heritage that is Lindsborg. Next stop was Bethany College for the sharing of a meal with other women in the student cafeteria. Many of us noted that the students were actively engaged with each other (as opposed to their phones) and courtesy and kindness for a group of older women was abundant. The food was as delicious as the conversation around the table. We were then invited to Messiah Lutheran Church where we enjoyed more conversation, and a tour of the stained glass and artwork that is Messiah. The congregation's connection to Bethany College is intimate, noteworthy, and extensive. A trip to view all of the rich culture of this college-founded church is a must. We were treated to a tour of the Dala food pantry located at Messiah where they are addressing food insecurities for those within their school district with integrity and hope. This pantry is unique in its service to the community at-large and also to the student population at Bethany. The evening concluded with a Star game where women matched pictures of stars with their descriptions—it's harder than you imagine! The women who gathered shared in a singular focus—to celebrate women and their love of Jesus the Christ.

Saturday morning began at Bethany Lutheran Church with "Fika" (the Swedish word for coffee). A variety of Swedish treats provided by the women of Messiah complemented the morning atmosphere. Much of the morning was spent in conversation where we shared personal stories, as well as what was happening in our congregations. This was rich with ideas to discuss within congregational units.

A special presentation by Shirley Reissig from The Associated Churches of Lindsborg (TACOL). TACOL is an organization that provides a wide variety of services within the community, including laundry services, a thrift store and supports other needs that burden members of the community (e.g., rent and utility assistance, etc.). TACOL is very active and blest to be supported by the community and willing volunteers.

Rev. Kim Frederking led a Bible study with the theme "Just Love" based on scriptures from Philippians and 1 Corinthians. The study left us feeling filled and content and wanting to live out our call as Lutherans to "Just Love". The study was the perfect segway to our closing worship where we shared in liturgy and Holy Communion.

Our gathering concluded with a lovely salad luncheon hosted by the women of Bethany Lutheran. The weekend was one of rich history and culture, fellowship, and new and renewed friendships. It was a perfect renewal of the mind, body, and spirit!

Submitted by Pastor Jill Duis, board member

Women of Central Kansas cluster gathered at Bethany Lutheran Church for conversation and Bible Study



Rev Kim Frederking, St. John Lutheran in Salina, leads Bible Study



Women of the Border Cluster Gather at Lord of Love Lutheran



Women of the Border Cluster
Gathered at Lord of Love Lutheran, Belton, on October 12th, 2024

New friendships were formed at our second cluster event of 2024. The women of the Border Cluster were personally welcomed by Pastor Vicki Hedger from Lord of Love Lutheran congregation in Belton, MO. Upon arrival participants enjoyed assorted baked goods and beverages in the fellowship hall. Those attending were asked to sit at the table indicating their birth month and enjoyed making new friends, which was all the easier after an ice breaker.

Louise Ahrens, board member and co-chair of the event, thanked everyone for attending and Lord of Love ladies for hosting. Gloria Sharp, president, spoke and encouraged all women to attend the Synodical Organization convention in 2025. She also spoke about the renaming of the Education Scholarship Fund to honor Lynn Starr, the first president of the Central States Synodical Organization.

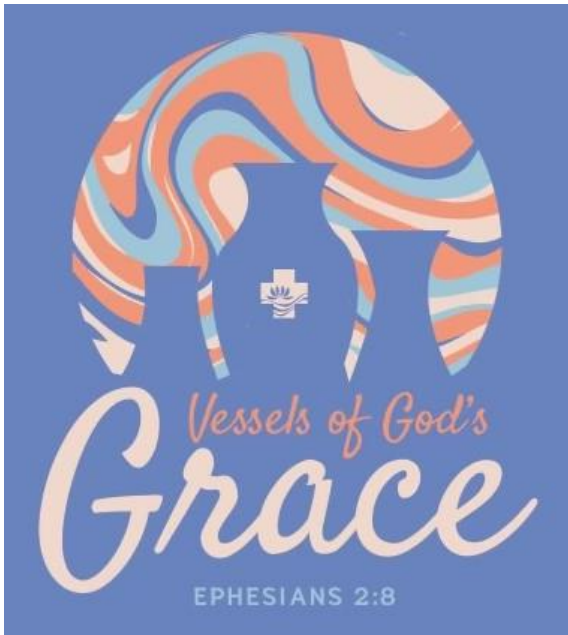
Pastor Vicki Hedger led the Bible study reflecting on the theme of the day, *“Just Love—Welcoming Refugees in our Midst”* which provided the spiritual foundation for the guest speakers, who presented following a bountiful salad luncheon.

Speakers were Sarah Kolsto, Director of Refugee Services from Della Lamb, who spoke about the refugee process from preparation to entry into the United States through several months thereafter. The other speaker was Ann Say. Ann and her husband, Pastor Bill, formed an organization, *Once We Were Refugees*. She spoke about their experiences with refugees, beginning in 1973 during the Vietnam era.

The afternoon concluded with the blessing of our offering, which was directed toward the Central States Synodical Organization. An ingathering of household cleaning supplies for use by refugees as they inhabit new homes in the Kansas City area was collected. Many thanks to Pastor Vicki and the ladies of Lord of Love for extending their hospitality to the ladies of the Border Cluster.

Submitted by Louise Ahrens, board member

Invitation to 2025 Convention “Vessels of God’s Grace”



Grace fills us, flows over us, and saves us. God’s perfect, unearned gift of forgiveness and salvation is cause for celebration. Please make plans to attend the 2025 Central States women of the ELCA convention on June 20-22, 2025 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Independence, Missouri. We will gather from across Kansas and Missouri, vessels filled with grace and purpose, to share and celebrate God’s love for us and our neighbors.

Board members are busy planning a grace filled, fun weekend. There will be inspirational presenters, uplifting music, meaningful worship, Bible study, t-shirts, time to meet and mingle in a fully-stocked hospitality room, shopping, BINGO, sing-alongs, raffle items, and idea sharing from cluster gatherings across the Synod.

This is the first convention since 2023 now that the conventions are being held only in odd numbered years. In 2024 over 200 women in the Central States Synod attended one of five cluster events! That is AMAZING. We invite every one to gather in June 2025 to celebrate the gift of grace.

Grace is a strong, active force that can be felt and experienced. It changes people—it leads, drives, and draws them in. We are *Vessels of God’s Grace*. Keep checking our website www.css-elca.org/welca for updates and registration materials. Until then, reserve that weekend on your calendar. Amazing Grace!

Submitted by Kathy Steinke, vice president

Remember the Ladies... of the ELCA

In 1776, as John Adams was meeting with the Continental Congress to form a new nation, his wife wrote a letter in which she asked him to “remember the ladies” as they went about their work. We too, have an opportunity to “remember the ladies” who have formed the Women of the ELCA and those that will carry this organization forward into the future.

If you have investments which require you to take a minimum distribution of funds (RMD), consider making a charitable donation to the Central States Synodical Organization. Your contribution will be used to support the ongoing mission of the organization and provide opportunities for women across Kansas and Missouri to participate more fully in the activities of our synod. Your donation will enhance convention activities, support cluster events and provide for educational scholarships.

Submitted by Pat Dunavan, board member

Election of Voting Members for 2026 Triennial

Election of voting members to the 2026 Triennial will take place at the Synodical Organization convention in June. We have been allotted four voting members plus the synodical president. As nearly as possible, at least 10% of the delegation shall be persons of color or whose primary language is other than English. At least one of the voting members shall be a woman attending the convention for the first time.

Because the cost of the 2023 Triennial Convention and Gathering greatly exceeded revenue, the Churchwide Executive Board has voted to hold a virtual Triennial Convention from Des Moines, July 13-15, 2026. However, the Gathering will still be held in person in Des Moines, July 16-19, 2026.

Please consider placing your name on the ballot to be one of the Triennial voting members!

“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 (NRSV)

Our Offerings at Work

Through the generous offerings of the Central States Women of the ELCA, I can report that each of our treasury funds are financially sound. The present balance of our GENERAL FUND, to which all regular offerings are deposited is \$25,644.74. As we did not hold our annual convention this year, we are maintaining a strong balance.

The LYNN STARR EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND, which is used for scholarships stands at \$2,279.07. This fund was renamed earlier this year in memory of Lynn Starr, the first president of our Synodical Organization. This past year \$2,750.00 in scholarships were awarded. Therefore, any donations from congregational units or individuals to this fund would be greatly appreciated to assist in continuing to award substantial scholarships to women wishing to further their education.

Finally, the balance of the BARBARA NELSON TRIENNIAL CONVENTION MEMORIAL FUND is \$17,178.46. This fund provides scholarships for Central States women to attend the Triennial Gathering. In 2026, this churchwide event is being held in the Midwest—Des Moines, Iowa!! The dates of the Gathering are July 16-19, 2026. This scholarship will assist first-time attendees with their registration and other expenses. Be watching for more information about applying.

Recently, I was asked by one of our synod congregations how offerings are used. I was pleased to respond with the following information:

- One-half of all unit offerings is sent to the Churchwide organization to support their work.
- Occasionally, a unit will designate a portion of their offerings to other ELCA causes, such as Katie's Fund, Lutheran Work Relief (shipping costs), missions, and disaster relief.
- Some units designate a portion of their offering to the Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Fund.
- There is cost for postage and office supplies used in the business of the organization and printing and mailing of *Walking in the Word*.
- Stipends are paid to those who audit financial records

Finally, when planning for convention, the Board strives for the lowest possible registration fee. Thus, offering monies are used to cover outstanding expenses, such as housing, mileage, and stipends for speakers, chaplain, and the churchwide representative, banquet entertainment, and support for meal costs.

Offerings are closely managed and surely put to good use. Again, thank-you to all for your generosity.

Submitted by Janice Gerken, treasurer



Katie's Fund is an endowment that supports ministries focused on global sharing, leadership development and faith in daily life. It honors the legacy of Katharina von Bora Luther. There is a campaign known as *2122: Growing Katie's Fund for the Next 100 Years*. As part of this campaign each synodical organization was given \$1000 as a leadership grant to be used at their discretion. Our organization gave each cluster \$200 to procure a speaker for their 2024 cluster gathering.

In June 2024 Linda Post Bushkofsky retired after serving 22 years as the executive director of WELCA. The Board of our synodical organization contributed \$500 to the 2122 campaign in honor of Linda's retirement. Should individuals or congregational units wish to honor Linda's service, checks should be made payable to Women of the ELCA and sent to ELCA Gift Processing Center, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009. Note 'Katie's Fund WOGO206/retirement' in the memo line. Gifts can also be given online at <https://community.elca.org/welca>. Indicate the gift is in honor of Linda's retirement.

Submitted by Gaye Mizell, board member

Still Needed—Editor for our WITW Newsletter

Vickie Donnell has graciously been serving as the editor for this *Walking in the Word* newsletter. She would like to pass this opportunity on to a new editor. If you are interested or know of someone who has an interest in serving in this way, please contact Gloria Sharp, president, at 573-462-9758 or gjsharp@aol.com.



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF

Celebrating 2024...

~Looking back—we celebrate the good work of 2024~

- **Christ Lutheran, Wichita ingathering**
10 churches brought 451 quilts, 250 personal care kits, 340 school kits, 111 baby kits, and 15 fabric kits.
- **Our Savior’s, Jefferson City ingathering**
12 churches brought 266 boxes with 746 quilts, 426 personal care kits, 457 school kits, 112 baby kits, 64 fabric kits, and collected \$3,834.25 for shipping costs.
- **St. John’s, Salina ingathering**
22 churches brought 1,206 quilts, 524 personal care kits, 1,277 school kits, 451 baby kits, 23 fabric kits, and 5 blankets.
- **St. John, Pittsburg ingathering**
2 churches brought 237 quilts
- **St. Mark’s/Shepherd of the Hills, Greater St. Louis ingathering**
20 churches brought 225 boxes with 705 quilts, 514 personal care kits, 565 school kits, 5 baby kits, 31 fabric kits, and collected \$1,385 for shipping costs.
- **Trinity, Hays ingathering**
Numbers not available at the time of printing



LWR Ingatherings

We praise God for all who help in any way to support the quilt and kit ministry of Lutheran World Relief. The quilts and kits are sent all over the world to areas experiencing war and natural disasters. Recently LWR announced that kits and quilts are being sent to areas in the United States where there is need.

This year personal care kits were given to sailors who were stranded in Baltimore after the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. Ten containers of LWR quilts and kits have recently reached communities in the southeastern United States that were devastated by hurricanes Helene and Milton. Recipients included residents of a shelter for homeless veterans that was badly flooded in Asheville, North Carolina.

We are joyous in support of this very important ministry. As caring people, we will continue to make a difference in our world.

...Working toward 2025

~Looking forward—to celebrating the good work of 2025~

- October 18 Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran St. Ann, MO
- October 18 Our Savior’s Lutheran Jefferson City, MO
- October 21 Christ Lutheran Wichita, KS
- October 21 St. John Lutheran Pittsburg, KS
- October 22 Trinity Lutheran Hays, KS
- October 23 St. John’s Lutheran Salina, KS



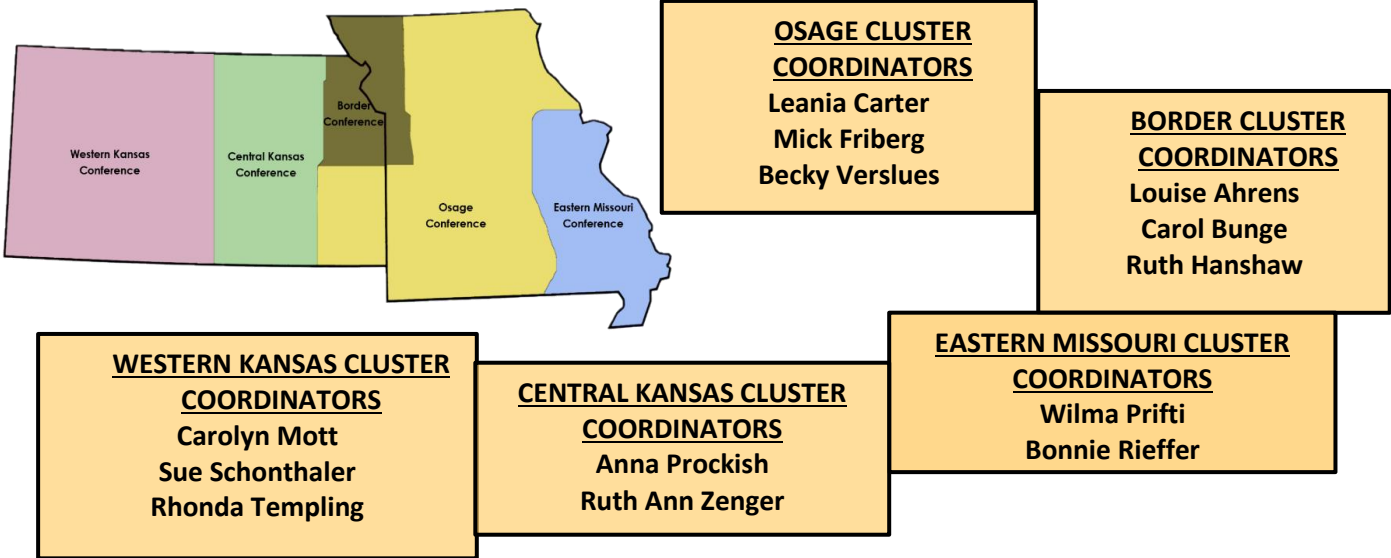
Ingatherings Bring Together Smiling Faces and Willing Hearts

Upper Left: Our Savior’s Jefferson City, MO

Left: Trinity Hays, KS

Above: St. Marks & Shepherd of the Hills St. Louis, MO area

Thanks to Our Cluster Coordinators



Western Kansas Cluster Gathers in Hays

“Just Love” was the theme for the Western Kansas cluster meeting that was held August 24th at Trinity Lutheran Church in Hays, Kansas. Rhonda Templing, Carolyn Mott, and Sue Schonthaler, cluster coordinators, orchestrated the event and welcomed everyone. The women attending came from several areas of the cluster with around 40 attending. Everyone enjoyed visiting and there was laughter and hugs as the women gathered. Carolyn began the meeting with devotions, Rhonda introduced the speaker, Heidi Olson, who spoke on anti-human trafficking efforts. Susie Borgstrom reported on activities of the synodical organization board. There was information shared about Katie’s Fund. Following a delicious lunch, all enjoyed a style show provided by Simply Charmed, a local boutique. The meeting closed with Carolyn leading devotions and prayer. It was awesome to be together.

Submitted by Susie Borgstrom, secretary



Left: Women of Western Kansas Cluster gather in Hays, Kansas

Below: Western Kansas Cluster Coordinators (L to R) Sue Schonthaler, Carolyn Mott, Rhonda Templing



Inspiring Words from Rev Dinah

Dear Sisters in Christ,

“...Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68 NRSV) comes to mind as I write this note to you. I have been hearing much anxiety, fear, disappointment, and division since the election. First, I want to encourage you to continue to trust our Lord, and sing like David, “...my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (Psalm 23: 5b - 6a NRSV).

I have been reflecting on my journey as an ordained minister of the ELCA. My pastor at one time in my life, Rev. Jeff Lilley, serving at Good Shepherd Lutheran in Lawrence, Kansas, was instrumental as he identified me—the only person of color in the congregation. He encouraged, prayed, and helped me hear God’s call to ministry. Why he did this, I have no idea, except that he shared the many times that God nudged him, and he had listened to the voice and responded. The Rev. Jeff Lilley served as pastor of Lutheran Church of Honolulu until October 13th when he passed at the church while preparing for worship. I, along with hundreds of people whose lives he touched, are broken hearted and devastated. Please pray for his family and all who called him friend and pastor.

Now on to something that has brought me much joy. I met Sister Elizabeth from Nairobi, Kenya, at the Metropolitan New York WELCA convention when I went there as a churchwide speaker in 2017. She along with a group of women gave a presentation on how they were helping young girls in her village in Kenya by providing sanitary napkins. They told how

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...Inspiring Words

young girls do not go to school and miss classes every month as they do not have access to sanitary supplies. Sister Elizabeth took it as her mission to help them raise money by selling the beautiful jewelry and scarfs they made and sent to her.

After retiring, she left her comfortable life in New York and went back to her village in Nairobi to be a disciple of Christ to help young girls. I was touched by her ministry and became a supporter of her ministry in 2017 and continued after she returned to Kenya. I was most honored this year when she invited me to her village. In June I went to preach at the high school graduation of the young girls I had supported. I could not believe I had the opportunity to proclaim the Word in the same church my father, Rev. Dr. Pooranchand, preached in 50 years ago. Again, all of this was possible because one person took a chance and walked with me to hear God's call.

At the convention in 2023 I challenged you to identify a person of color in your congregation or outside of it and invite them to become acquainted with Women of the ELCA. Are you planning on inviting someone to attend the convention with you in June 2025? In what ways are you filling the role of a true disciple the Lord called each of us to be? Are you willing to be the vessel ready to be molded as a vessel of grace, mercy, and love?

May the peace of the Lord be with you,
Rev Dinah Dutta, board member



Opportunity to Share WELCA

Do you like to travel? Would you like to share your WELCA experiences with women in another country? This project may be calling your name. In fall 2025 Central States Synodical Organization is partnering with the Central States Synod companion synod team to send 3 or 4 women to the Kotte District in Papua New Guinea. The purpose of the trip is to share WELCA experiences and grow in understanding about the culture and women's organization in Kotte District.

In 2026, representatives from Papua New Guinea will travel to the United States to take part in the WELCA Triennial in Des Moines. Prayerfully consider if this experience is for you. If you are interested or have additional questions, contact Gloria Sharp at gjssharp@aol.com.



Thanks to All for a Great Year

What a wonderful year it has been for the Central States Women of the ELCA! We started 2024 by asking each of our newly formed clusters to host at least one event using the theme “Just Love”. Each of the clusters, under the leadership of their cluster coordinators, took on the challenge and hosted uplifting events. The programs explored human trafficking, immigration and the plight of refugees, self-care, and much more. Participants shared Bible study, gathered in-kind donations, and enjoyed delicious food and meaningful conversation. Within each cluster there was renewed participation and a hunger for in-person fellowship. Additionally, some of the congregational units that formerly met together, prior to the reorganization into clusters, continued to meet together to stay in touch and nurture friendships.

Now we look forward to 2025, we hope that this enthusiasm will continue to grow. We look forward to the 36th Synodical Organization convention in June and hope that all that contributed to the success of the cluster events through their presence will join us in Independence, Missouri for another opportunity to nurture friendships and delve into the Gospel as “*Vessels of God’s Grace*”.

We look forward to seeing you in June,
Central States Synodical Organization Board

What is Going on with Central States Women?



Women from Kent Memorial, Sunrise Beach, Gathered to Finish Their Review of “Once Upon a Wardrobe” by Patti Callahan



Women of Mid-Missouri Gathered at St. Andrews, Columbia, with a theme from 1 Thessalonians “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (5: 16-18 NRSV)

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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.

**Central States Synodical Organization
Women of the ELCA
Lynn Starr Education Scholarship Application
2025 Award**

Please write legibly

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Home Phone _____ **Cell phone** _____

Email Address _____

Home Church _____ **City** _____ **State** _____

College Attending (if known) _____

Signature of Applicant _____

Recommended by _____ **Title** _____

Guidelines:

1. Scholarships are awarded to female members of any ELCA congregation seeking post high school education. There is a limit of one award recipient per congregation.
2. Priority is given to female members of Central States Synod congregations.
3. The award is a one-year non-renewable scholarship.
4. Scholarship monies are written to and sent directly to the educational institution the recipient is attending.
5. A written recommendation and signature from the applicant's pastor, mentor, unit president or unit representative must be included with this application. The recommendation cannot come from a current or previous board member (within last four years).
6. A well-written essay of approximately 500 words, describing applicant's participation in church, school, and community activities, must be included with this application. **This essay is the primary determining factor in the awarding of scholarships.**
7. Award recipients will be notified in May 2025.
8. Award recipients will be asked to forward a photo electronically that will be used in synodical organization publications, along with the name and address of their college.
9. Individual awards will not exceed \$1,000. Multiple awards may be given in a year.
10. It will be the recipient's responsibility to keep the CSS Board Treasurer, Janice Gerken, informed of the college selection and its address, along with the recipient's student ID number at janicegerken@aol.com.
11. **Application must be postmarked by April 15, 2025.**

**Send application to:
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314-606-9567
Lovetoknit50@gmail.com**