

Central States Synod 2024 Synod Assembly

June 6-8, 2024

2024 Nominations for Central States Synod

Introduction

Each year the voting members of the Synod Assembly elect people who have been nominated to various positions, such as members of the Synod Council. Ultimately, the voting members of the Assembly are responsible for the nominations, but they are assisted by members of congregations, area ministry leaders, and the Nominating Committee. There are two stages to the nominating process, one before the assembly and one at the assembly. All Synod Council positions (except the youth positions) require a background check and therefore nominees need to submit a [disclosure form](#) along with the [nomination form](#).

Pre-Assembly

Early in the calendar year, the Nominating Committee works with conferences to fulfill its responsibility as described in the synod bylaws (S9.03.04). Nomination forms are to be submitted to the synod office no later than April 15, 2024. The chair of the Nominating Committee is Pat Bjuland, Atonement Lutheran Church, Overland Park, KS.

Phone: 816-674-0828. E-mail: pbjuland@sbcglobal.net.

At the Assembly

Nominations may also take place at the assembly as described in the synod bylaws (S9.03.05). People nominated from the floor need to provide information requested on the biographical form and in some cases, a disclosure form.

Participating in the Process

Whether you are a voting member of the assembly or not, if you have questions about how you can participate in the nominating process or would like to suggest someone for nomination, please contact your pastor, the chair of the Nominating Committee, Pat Bjuland, or Tim Anderson at the synod office (913-948-9701, tanderson@css-elca.org).

Helpful information:

Responsibilities for Synod Council members:

- Be the board of directors for the synod and serve as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly.
- Carry out the resolutions of the assembly.
- Attend council meetings, ordinarily three times a year.
- Interpret the work of the synod through their conferences and across the synod.

The term "persons of color and/or person whose primary language is other than English" (PC/L*) is understood to mean African American, Black, Arab, and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, Latino, Native American, and Alaska Native people.

The term "youth" means a voting member of a congregation who has not reached the age of 18 at the time of election.

The term "young adult" means a voting member of a congregation between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of election.

It is the goal of this synod that at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, committees, and organizational units of this synod be youth and young adults. (S6.04.B09. Adopted by 2009 Churchwide Assembly)

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Pre- Assembly Nominations 2024

The Nominating Committee offers the following nominations:

Synod Council Members (3-year term except where noted)

Western Kansas Conference - lay male (incumbent eligible)	Logan Simon*
Osage Conference - clergy male (incumbent eligible)	David Frerichs*
Eastern Missouri Conference - clergy female	Kristina Reyes
At Large - male-POC	Richard Ashley
At Large – female	Diane Bottorf Ingrid Peterson Alesia Roccia

* Incumbent

2025 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

Eastern Missouri Conference - clergy male	
Osage Conference - lay female	Vickie Donnell
Border Conference - lay female	Melodee Blobaum Laura Kamienski Sarah Thomas Joyce Uber
Central Kansas Conference - lay male	Carol Swenson
Western Kansas Conference - clergy male	Robert (Lee) Bennight
At Large POC - clergy female	Kaylie Ines
At Large POC - lay male	Terrence Freeman
At Large Youth/Young Adult - lay female	Brianna Dehn Megan Mong
At Large Youth/Young Adult - lay male	Sam Neff

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Biographical Information—Nominees

Synod Council Nominations

Position: Western Kansas Conference **Name:** Mr. Logan Simon

Congregation membership: Trinity Lutheran, Hays, KS

Congregational Activities: Church council member, worship committee, property committee, and website/technology committee.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Western Kansas Conference gatherings, appointed to fill vacant position on synod council.

Community Activities: Kansas/Ellis County Democrats

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Osage Conference **Name:** Rev. David Frerichs

Congregation membership: Saint Andrew's Lutheran Church, Columbia, MO

Congregational Activities: Prior to serving three congregations as pastor (Bethany, Tulsa, OK; Zion, Albion, NE; St. Andrew's, Columbia, MO), supported youth ministry and Bible study in my home congregation, worship committee/worship planning team. In current setting have worked with Calvary Episcopal Church to establish Episcopal Lutheran Campus Ministry as well as a shared Youth Ministry program, ELFY.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Currently serve on Synod Council (elected 2021), serve as a member of Bishop Election Discernment Team, in Wichita helped lead Area Ministry Youth Team (before seminary), served on Hotel Life Staff at ELCA Youth Gathering (1991, '94, '97, and 2000), Churchwide Assembly Voting Member (2007), served on the advisory board for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Northeast Community College, Norfolk, NE. While serving in the Arkansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska Synods, I facilitated a number of clergy colleague groups featuring Bowen Theory of Emotional Systems as a resource for ministry and life.

Community Activities: In Albion, NE, I partnered with the sheriff to establish a Mobile Food Pantry serving our community and county.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Eastern Missouri Conference **Name:** Rev. Kristina Reyes

Congregation membership: Good Shepherd Lutheran, Manchester, MO (LuMin St. Louis)

Congregational Activities: worship support as needed, social justice postcard action

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: mission table 2020-2023; hearts across the heartland; racial justice team; campus ministry synod team

Community Activities: Missouri Clergy for Transrights, Transgiving, Missouri Clergy for Safer Gun Laws, guest in student classes

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: At Large **Name:** Rev. Richard Ashley

Congregation membership: St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran, St. Louis, MO

Congregational Activities: Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) serving St. Philip's

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Synod assembly voting member, attend all Theological conferences, member of African Decent Lutheran Association (ADLA), Eastern Conference Care and Conciliation gathering.

Community Activities: active member of the Clergy Coalition, involved with the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, participate in the Ville Collaborative.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** Yes

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Synod Council Nominations

Position: Border Conference **Name:** Ms. Diane Bottorff
Congregation membership: Trinity Lutheran, Topeka, KS

Congregational Activities: Council president (current & previous), Council secretary, Altar Guild, Nominating Committee, Sunday School teacher, Lector, Usher

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Youth Gathering adult sponsor 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018; Voting member Synod Assembly 2023 and prior years; Member Synod Council 1996 - 1999

Community Activities: Board member Doorstep, Inc; Board member Topeka Lutheran Home Association/Luther Gardens Participate in Walk to End Alzheimer’s for over 30 years

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: At Large **Name:** Ms. Ingrid Peterson

Congregation membership: Immanuel Lutheran, Kansas City, MO

Congregational Activities: I have been a member of Immanuel for 40 years. The following activities encompass my participation through several years. Altar Guild (member and past chair), Church Council (member, secretary, vice-president), Church Choir (current), Handbells (current), Sunday School Teacher, Audit Committee (current chair), Nominating Committee (current). I have also participated in volunteering through the MLM Christmas Store held at Immanuel and at various times at the Gathering Table.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Congregational delegate to Synod Convention (1991, 2021)

Community Activities: Volunteer at Overland Park Arboretum.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: At Large **Name:** Ms. Alesia Roccia

Congregation membership: Family of Christ, Imperial, MO

Congregational Activities: CSS certified Parish Ministry Associate in good standing. Current Congregation President, completing 6 terms. I have served on Family of Christ Congregation Council in every position over 24 years. During my tenure as President, Family of Christ retired the mortgage of the church. I have lead youth education, Vacation Bible School, Worship, Stewardship. I serve as assistant to the minister, lector, and altar guild.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Pulpit supply as a PMA for St. Thomas Holy Spirit and Family of Christ Founder and Director of GSFFAM, a ministry for adults of all abilities with Good Shepherd, Manchester MO Central States Synod Hunger Team: Hunger and Issues of Equity presentation on Food Insecurity for Eastern Missouri communities

Community Activities: Advocate for adults with developmental disabilities, Food insecurity task force and advocacy - Missouri and Illinois, Collaborate with community faith-based programs for feeding the hungry Professional presentations: Hunger and Issues of Equity on Food Insecurity for Eastern Missouri Communities Food Insecurity in the Bi-State Region Food and Faith: serving God’s children through nutrition safety and security

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

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2025 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Nominations

Position: Osage Conference **Name:** Ms. Vickie Donnell
Congregation membership: Messiah Lutheran, Springfield, MO
Congregational Activities: Chairs Evangelism Committee and Lay Internship Committee; Member of Congregational Care Committee and Shepherding Teams; Participates in Lutheran World Relief work, Women of the ELCA, Piecemakers; Serves as Assisting Minister and Council Recording Secretary.
Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Served on Central States Synodical Organization of Women of the ELCA Board as Treasurer and President (2017-2023), Voting Member at Synod Assembly (most recently 2021, 2024)
Community Activities: Volunteers at several community organizations, including Council of Churches of the Ozarks.
YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Border Conference **Name:** Ms. Melodee Blobaum
Congregation membership: Immanuel Lutheran, Kansas City, MO
Congregational Activities: President - Congregation Council, Chair - Altar Guild, Member - Worship and Arts Committee, Prayer Team, Friends of Literature Group
Organizer: Movie Group
Writer: Prayer Team quarterly healing services, annual Longest Night Service, midweek email prayers, Sunday intercessory prayers.
Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Editor, Synod Assembly newsletter, 1995-2001
Community Activities: Board of Managers, Parkway Towers Condominium, Kansas City, Mo.
Member, Parkway Towers Events Team, Welcoming Committee, Communications Committee
Member, Platte Land Trust Board of Directors, 2017-2020 Served one term on Resolutions Committee
YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Border Conference **Name:** Ms. Laura Kamienski
Congregation membership: Atonement Lutheran, Overland Park, KS
Congregational Activities: taught adult education study, Welcome and Inclusion Team (including ongoing collaboration with Stewardship Team), Small Groups Team, Circle
Synodical/Churchwide Activities:
Community Activities: blood donor, SilverLake Homes Association Board, Embroiderer's Guild of America local, regional, and national offices including education
YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Border Conference **Name:** Ms. Sarah Thomas
Congregation membership: Our Savior's Lutheran, Topeka, KS
Congregational Activities: Altar Guild, Steam Services, Communion Assistant, occasional pulpit supply
Synodical/Churchwide Activities: I'm a Parish Ministry Associate and preside at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Valley Falls, KS once a month.
Community Activities: I'm a sponsor for the National Honor Society at Washburn Rural High School and work with students on volunteer projects including the school wide Blood Drive.
YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

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2025 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Nominations

Position: Border Conference

Name: Ms. Joyce Uber

Congregation membership: Hosanna! Lutheran, Liberty, MO

Congregational Activities: Council secretary, council liaison for WELCA, social ministry. Member of church choir, serve on altar guild, Lector, communion assistant, prayer team and prayer weavers.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Central States WELCA convention 2023

Community Activities: Deliver food collected to InAsMuch Ministry

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Central Kansas Conference

Name: Mr. Carol Swenson

Congregation membership: Trinity Lutheran, McPherson, KS

Congregational Activities: Trinity-McPherson member for 50+ years; Congregation Treasurer; Council member; Finance committee chair for \$1 million organ expansion & sanctuary renovation Finance Committee; Stewardship Committee; Pastoral Call Committee (multiple times); Handbell Choir; Confirmation mentor; Cross-Generational Ministry; Vacation Bible School; Usher; Greeter; Lector; Communion Server; Sunday morning coffee maker

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Synod Assembly delegate (multiple times); CSS Lutheran Campus Ministry Team

Community Activities: Retired - Teacher (Jr High, High School), Assistant Principal, Activities Director; College Sports Information Director; Development campaigns for McPherson Community Food Bank, McPherson Museum, campaign coordinator for USD 418 Community Field (stadium & track complex); Optimists Club; Announcer - KSHSAA State track & field meet (47 years), Big-12 track & field; KCAC cross country & track; Editor - histories of KSHSAA State Basketball, Cross County, & Track & Field; KSHSAA Classification Committee; USATF Press Officer - USA National U-20 T&F teams to 3 World Championships & Team USA pre-competition Olympic training camps; Regional Manager - Nike High School Cross-Country Nationals; Member of KSHSAA, McPherson College & McPherson High School Halls of Fame

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

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2025 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Nominations

Position: Western Kansas Conference

Name: Rev. Robert (Lee) Bennight

Congregation membership: Emmanuel Lutheran, Stuttgart, KS

Congregational Activities: I serve as co-pastor with my wife, Rev. Kathryn Whitney, of Disciples of the Plains Lutheran Ministry, which is a four-congregation parish located in Smith and Phillips Counties in Kansas. I have been in this call for almost 9 years. Before this, I served as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Durand, Illinois, for just under 10 years. Prior to seminary, I was an active member of Christ Lutheran Church in Sedona, Az, Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Tucson, Arizona, where I was involved in college ministry and activities, and Faith Lutheran Church in Yuma, Arizona, where I was baptized, confirmed, and ordained.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: I am co-dean of the Western Kansas Conference along with Rev. Adam Wutka. I am part of the committee helping the Central States Synod in its discernment for what is needed for the upcoming 2025 Synod Bishop Election. I was a part of the Faithful Innovations team. While in Northern Illinois Synod, I wrote and eventually cosponsored a combined resolution to support those ministering alongside undocumented immigrants.

Community Activities: I served as a member of the Phillips County Ministerial Alliance as president, vice-president, treasurer, and acting secretary. I monitored the Ministerial Alliance Care Phone for emergency financial needs in the community. I volunteer with the Phillips County Food Pantry. I regularly lead Bible study and Holy Communion worship services for our local assisted living and nursing home. I have worked with the local LGBTQ community to find safe places for support group meetings. While our child was in middle school and high school, both Kathy and I volunteered to support various school activities.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

Position: At Large POC Female

Name: Rev. Kaylie Ines

Congregation membership: Walsburg Lutheran, Walsburg, KS

Congregational Activities:

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Lutherans Restoring Creation Board and Mission Table, Kansas Interfaith Action Network Board Member, Kansas State Lutheran Campus Ministry Board Member

Community Activities:

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** Yes **POC/LOE:** Yes

Position: At Large POC Male

Name: Mr. Terrence Freeman

Congregation membership: St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran, St. Louis, MO

Congregational Activities: President Church Council (5 years)

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Synod Council, Executive Committee

Community Activities: Great Rivers Collaborative (Small ELCA Congregations); National Society of Black Engineers Pre-College Initiative; One Hundred Black Men of America Youth Director; Empowerment Network Cancer Support

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** Yes

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2025 Churchwide Assembly Voting Member Nominations

Position: At Large Youth/YA

Name: Ms. Brianna Dehn

Congregation membership: Good Shepherd Lutheran, St. Louis, MO

Congregational Activities: I tried to get a play going for the seniors at my church but that fell through and I'm joining a small group. I've only been a member since October 2023 but am looking to get more involved.

Synodical/Churchwide Activities:

Community Activities: I write a lot of plays for schools and sometimes direct them.

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** Yes **POC/LOE:** No

Position: At Large Youth/YA

Name: Ms. Megan Mong

Congregation membership: Immanuel Lutheran, Salina, KS

Congregational Activities: guest preacher, Sunday school and adult ed teacher, extra office help/support, youth chaperone

Synodical/Churchwide Activities: Seminarian at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Mass Gathering Team for ELCA Youth Gathering 2024, Churchwide Voting Member 2019/2017, Property manager for ELCA Youth Gathering 2022, YAGM Volunteer Jerusalem/West Bank program 2019-2020, Becoming Conference 2022 attendee, Peace Not Walls/Sumud

Community Activities: Seminars for Justice, LSTC Master's Student Association finance committee

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** Yes **POC/LOE:** No

Position: Central Kansas Conference

Name: Mr. Samuel Neff

Congregation membership: Redeemer Lutheran Church, Salina, KS

Congregational Activities: Choir, bell choir, lector, cantor, VBS, sound

Synodical/Churchwide Activities:

Community Activities: D&I Chair at work

YOUTH: No **YOUNG ADULT:** No **POC/LOE:** No

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2024 Nomination Biographical Information

Anyone accepting nomination for a Synod Council position must have a background check and therefore fill out a disclosure form. This does not apply to nominees for the Consultation and Discipline Committees or Churchwide voting members.

Conference _____

Position Nominated for: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ e-mail: _____

Congregational membership (include city/state): _____

Congregational activities: _____

Synodical/churchwide activities: _____

Community activities: _____

Person of color/language other than English? ___ yes ___ no
Youth (younger than 18 years old) ___ yes ___ no (DOB _____)
Young Adult (between 18 & 30 years old) ___ yes ___ no (DOB _____)

Nominated by: _____

*Please return this form no later than **April 15, 2024** to Central States Synod, 420 W. 14th St., Suite 101, Kansas City, MO 64105 or Tim Anderson at tanderson@css-elca.org*

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Disclosure Form

As part of the election process, the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, requires, by continuing resolution S9.12.A08, that a background check be obtained for all nominees for synod officers and synod council members, **except for youth** Please return this form directly to Tim Anderson at the synod office or by e-mail to tanderson@css-elca.org.

AUTHORIZATION

During the 2023 nominating and election process and at any time during the tenure of any position as a synod officer or Synod Council member to which I may be elected, I hereby authorize First Advantage Background Services, Corporation, P.O. Box 105292, Atlanta, GA 30348, 1-800-845-6004, on behalf of the Central States Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to verify my social security number and do a check of the national criminal data base for any convictions. An additional credit history check will be done for the nominees for the position of the synod treasurer. I understand that I may request a complete and accurate disclosure of the nature and scope of the background verification.

Nominee Name (Please print and include middle name)

Address (Complete address with city/state/zip)

Nominee Signature

Date

_____-_____-_____
Social Security Number *

Date of Birth

*For Identification Purposes Only