

## 2024 Central States Synod Assembly - Daily Summary

### Thursday, June 6, 2024

Synod Assembly kicked off with an Italian dinner catered by [Cupini's](#) followed by opening worship. A big thank you goes out to [St. Mark's Lutheran, Olathe](#) for being wonderful hosts.

### Friday, June 7, 2024

#### Plenary I

The day began with an extended land acknowledgment recognizing the indigenous people that have throughout the years called parts of Kansas and Missouri their home. **We Remember and give thanks for their care of the land.**

After a brief welcome from Bishop Candea the assembly was invited into the first of three Bible study discussion to help us focus and center our actions in the Spirit. Rev. Donna Simon, Director of Evangelical Mission led us through the Valley of Dry Bones - Ezekiel 37:1-14.

Bishop Candea then gave her report sharing the state of the synod, boldly sharing the realities we face. . .

- Reality - We are getting smaller
  - 153 Congregations
    - 36 Worship 1-25
    - 39 Worship 26-50
    - 36 Worship 51-100
    - 12 worship 101 – 150
    - 3 worship 151-200
    - 4 worship over 200 (largest 309)
  - (23 congregations submitted no annual report to the ELCA )
- Reality - Providing pastoral leadership is a challenge
  - 44 congregations share pastoral leadership
  - 35 congregations are served by rostered ministers (many of whom are retired) on a part-time basis
  - 33 Congregations are served by Synod Authorized Ministers or lay leaders
- Reality - Mission Support continues to decline
- How can we as followers of Jesus be radically resilient?
  - Brian McClearn writes about hope – how do we have hope, especially in these times when things can seem so dire? He suggested this mantra . . .

*“We will live as beautifully, bravely, and kindly as we can as long as we can, no matter how ugly, scary, and mean the world becomes.”*

Synod Vice President, Nancy Nagel addressed the assembly talking about the importance of taking time to breathe during times of discernment. For the synod council, this included

- The Budget – we’ve had to adjust to a significant decrease in mission support.
- The resolution to become a Reconciling in Christ Synod – we’ve prayerfully considered bringing this resolution forward to the Synod Assembly.
- The upcoming Bishop Transition – a Discernment Team has been formed to prepare for next year’s Bishop’s election.

She continues to trust in the Holy Spirit to lead us, even as we talk about money, sex, and change. She shared a moving story about her own congregation, Peace Lutheran, Washington, MO, and how the Spirit has been blowing there.

The nominations committee presented the names of those nominated to serve on Synod Council and as voting members to the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. There were no nominations from the floor and the slate of nominations remained as it appeared in the assembly binder:

- Synod Council:
  - Western Kansas Conference (lay male) Logan Simon
  - Osage Conference (clergy male) Rev. David Frerichs
  - Eastern Missouri Conference (clergy female) Rev. Kristina Reyes
  - At Large Male POC Rev. Richard Ashley
  - At Large Female Diane Bottorf  
Ingrid Peterson  
Alesia Roccia
- 2025 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members
  - Eastern Missouri Conference (clergy male) open
  - 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) Lee Bennight
  - At Large POC (clergy female) Kaylie Ines
  - At Large POC (lay male) Terrance Freeman
  - At Large Youth/Young Adult (lay female) Brianna Dehn  
Megan Mong
  - At Large Youth/Young Adult (lay male) Sam Neff

Synod Treasurer, Scott Schulte presented his report, including a year-end report for 2023, a revised budget for 2024 and introduced the proposed budget for 2025. Along with the bishop, Scott addressed questions from the floor. Questions focused mainly on efforts to understand and address declining mission support as well as how the synod may be reconfigured under a new bishop in 2025. After discussion, the budget passed as it appeared in the assembly binder.

The assembly broke for lunch, during which voting members could cast their ballots for synod council and churchwide voting members. Participants also had the opportunity to join the following lunchtime conversations. . .

- Churchwide with Rev. Sara Cutter
- KIFA & advocacy with Rabbi Moti
- Campus Ministry with the campus pastors
- Small Church Collaboration with Rev. Donna Simon

## **Friday, June 7, 2024**

### **Plenary II**

The assembly reconvened following lunch, beginning again with a Bible study. Rev. Aimée Appell, Director of Evangelical Mission led us through Mark 1:9-18, challenging us to believe and trust.

Bishop Candeia announced the results of the elections:

- Synod Council:
  - Western Kansas Conference (lay male) Logan Simon
  - Osage Conference (clergy male) Rev. David Frerichs
  - Eastern Missouri Conference (clergy female) Rev. Kristina Reyes
  - At Large Male POC Rev. Richard Ashley
- 2025 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members
  - Eastern Missouri Conference (clergy male) open
  - Osage Conference (lay female) Vickie Donnell
  - Central Kansas Conference (lay male) Carol Swenson
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  - At Large POC (lay male) Terrance Freeman
  - At Large Youth/Young Adult (lay female) Brianna Dehn
  - At Large Youth/Young Adult (lay female) Megan Mong
  - At Large Youth/Young Adult (lay male) Sam Neff

Run-off elections were announced for:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ At Large Female</li> </ul>                | <p>Ingrid Peterson<br/>Alesia Roccia</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Border Conference (lay female)</li> </ul> | <p>Melodee Blobaum<br/>Sarah Thomas</p>  |

Those elections took place as Rev. Sara Cutter, Senior Director for Operations in the Christian Community and Leadership, ELCA, presented her report to the assembly. Highlights included:

- Central States Synod mission support was \$643,000 in 2023, helping generate ideas together, supporting ministry to share the love of Christ in the world, and sustaining our ministry together.
- She recognized:
  - Susan Boxberger, who serves on the Church Council
  - Ruth Ellen Howard who serves on the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church.
  - Kevin Boatright, who serves on the Churchwide Committee on Discipline
  - Krista Harris & Todd Maloy, who serve on the Portico Board of Pensions
  - Lisa Peck, who serves on the board of 1517 Media Publishing House of the ELCA
- She highlighted the work of ELCA World Hunger over the last 50 years. Central States Synod has given \$428,898. Within the Central States, the following ministries have been the recipients of domestic hunger grants:
  - RSVP of Northeast Kansas
  - Gathering Table
  - ICT Food Rescue
  - Unity Lutheran Church

Her report also included a video message from Presiding Bishop Eaton “God’s love in these times.”

Rev. Dave Whetter, Bishop’s Associate presented the first of the resolutions before the assembly. All of which passed.

- SA 24.01 A Season of Global Awareness
- SA 24.02 Bethany College
- SA 24.03 Resolution to Become a Reconciling in Christ Synod
  - An amendment was proposed to SA 24.03 and was debated, ultimately not passing. The resolution then passed without further debate or amendment.

Due to time constraints, the remaining resolutions were tabled until the Plenary III session.

The assembly was then introduced to Cathy Hohl who serves as co-chair of the Synod’s Discernment Team organized to guide the synod through the process of preparing to elect a new bishop. Those in attendance were asked to discuss a several questions and share their

answers with the discernment team. This process will be repeated across the synod over the next several months.

Before adjourning, the final election results were shared:

- Synod Council
  - At Large (lay female) Alesia Roccia
- Churchwide Voting Member
  - Border Conference (lay female) Sarah Thomas

The day concluded with a celebration for our Parish Ministry Associates, Rostered Ministers, and Congregations celebrating milestone anniversaries during 2024.

## **Saturday, June 8, 2024**

### **Plenary III**

Saturday morning began with our final Bible study. Rev. Dave Whetter, Bishop's Associate shared John 20:19-23, hearing how Jesus breathed the Spirit into his disciples and sent them into the world.

Rev. Whetter then introduced the proposed Compensation Guidelines for 2025. There are minimal changes and the proposed guidelines were adopted as presented.

The final three resolutions were then introduced:

- SA 24.04 Resolution on Peace and Climate Justice
- SA 24.05 Pastoral Leadership Transitions in the Central States Synod
- SA 24.06 Thanksgiving for Ministry

Each of these resolutions were adopted by the assembly. At the conclusion of SA 24.06, the assembly stood and applauded to recognize the faithful work of the ministers and ministries named.

The assembly concluded with a brief worship service. Rev. Sara Cutter preached a message on Matthew 18, making it known to us all that God is not done with us yet.