

The W/ELCA mission must continue -- Alice Burnett, president

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. John 1:4

The Central States Synod Women of the ELCA have pressed on during these unprecedented times. You continue to be part of the mission of the women. I have heard stories of support given to our sisters and brothers in Christ by presenting Bible studies via ZOOM conference calls. Many also are sending cards, making phone calls and most importantly praying.

The determination to support Lutheran World Relief and your individual missions, despite many road blocks, is inspirational. Thank you. You are letting your "little light shine".

May you reflect this Christmas on the gift God gave us, JESUS. Even in the darkness of this lockdown, Jesus shines brightly.

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2021 W/ELCA Gathering plans are underway

-- Beth Rockelman, secretary

Adaptations, anticipation and untold stories lead the way into the future Women of ELCA plans. We are moving forward. We do not have firm prices yet for lodging and food. However, it is expected to be the same as in previous years. Information packets will be mailed April 30, 2021.

The theme, Bible verse, hymn and workshops will be retained. Bishop Susan Candeia will attend. Remember to crochet or knit prayer squares and gather items for the silent auction and mini raffles.

I am especially grateful for the detailed convention plans made by the late Paula Simonich and her friend.

I am very touched and appreciative of the many prayers, cards and love expressed to me following the tragic loss of my brother September 13.

Beth4@midamerica.net

(Prayers also extended to Rev. Dinah Dutta at the loss of her sister in India)



This 70 -year-old nativity scene is a little battered and worn. But I don't see the nicks and scratches. The family heirloom is a remembrance of past family Christmases and those with whom I made such wonderful memoirs. – Mary Liby

CSS W/ELCA SYNOD Gathering
Sept. 10 – 12, 2021
Marriott Courtyard, KCMO
Anna Prockish, registrar

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***Merry
Christmas!***

Rejoice, rejoice and make a joyful noise

-- The Rev. Dinah Dutta

Dear sisters in Christ,

What is on your mind? It would seem to be a strange question, isn't it? To be honest, I have so much I want to share with you during this very special season - a season of waiting, reflecting, and preparing. We are in an unusual season this year. You might ask, What I am waiting for? What am I preparing for?

I am waiting in anticipation of the day we emerge from the throes of COVID-19. I am preparing with the hope to be able to gather together in a community of faith to sing praises to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am clinging to this promise from the readings for the Advent season. *"He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead..."* (Isaiah 40:11) What a great promise!

This year many people, including myself, in the United States and around the world are grieving the loss of a beloved one due to COVID, cancer or other reasons. Can we find JOY in our grief? Yes, we can because we worship a living God who is yesterday, today and forever the same. His promises are true. He never fails us. We rejoice, we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Good Shepherd waits to gather us in His loving arms.

So dear ones I want to invite you to join me to sing my favorite hymn, and together let us

make a joyful noise! Happy waiting! Merry Christmas!

*"O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears*

***Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel***

*O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave*
*O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
**Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight***

*O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home
Make safe the way that leads on high
And close the path to misery*

*O come, Thou Wisdom from on high
And order all things, far and nigh
To us the path of knowledge show
And cause us in her ways to go"*

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Prayerfully consider being a W/ELCA synod officer

-- Alice Burnett, president

Due to the postponement of the 2020 convention, an election will be held for **ALL** board positions: president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and three board members.

You know who the leaders of your local W/ELCA unit are and who would be qualified for the positions. Please encourage one another in our callings. Each of you are called by God to serve. And it just may be to serve as a Women of the ELCA, Synod Women's Organization officer.

I regret to announce that board member Wendy Hoops has resigned her position. She has been a cherished leader in the W/ELCA. We wish her well as she and her family transition to the local Methodist Church. She will be a valuable asset to the UMW. God Bless you, Wendy.

(Editor's note: Officer nomination forms will be printed in the March 2021 newsletter.)

Put your “two cents” in a Blessing Jar -- Annalee Crotinger, secretary

(Annalee Crotinger gave this message at her church's Thankoffering service)

It was my true intent to find a nice reading or a special article to share with you as part of our Thankoffering service. But no matter how fervently I Googled and tried to find a gem of a story, I just couldn't find the right passage, or the right message. Believe me, my computer keyboard was smoking! So, in kind of a panicky state, I penned a few thoughts about the many personal blessings the Thankoffering holds for me, and hopefully for you also, as a Christian woman.

All of us have our own method of collecting coins throughout the year to give at our Thankoffering service. We might put our change in a piggy bank or set aside some dollars to supplement our coin collecting. We might prefer to write a check.

I really like to use one of the Blessing Mason jars my sister-in-law and I made a few years ago. It has become a small yet important part of what I think of as my Blessing Ritual. My ritual doesn't always happen on a daily basis. Yet it holds a lot of spiritual meaning to me when it is practiced.

As I unscrew the jar lid and take various coins out of my purse, I think of the many positive things and even the challenges that transpired since my last deposit of blessings. I like to hear the slow clinking and clacking of the coins as they meet the other coins in the jar.

I know I don't take enough time to give proper thanks for the blessings for which I have been rewarded. Whenever I look at my Blessing Jar, it is not nearly as full as it should be. I, then, am reminded that I need to show my thankfulness more often.

Even though a few coins (a handful or maybe two or three bits) go in at a time, their value constantly grows. Their value grows not only in terms of what they represent to me, but also by how many others will benefit from these blessings.

I used to think blessings were just good things and happy events. Yet, I learned they also may be the silver linings during hardships. We need to be thankful for it all.

When I take time to be more reflective, I listen to the clickety sounds of the coins and say words of special thanks....

*Thank you, Lord, for this day even though not everything went just right.

*Thank you, Jesus, for those times you simply have helped me make it through the day!

*Thank you, God, with all of my heart. I am grateful and blessed to have a home, a family, a fulfilling job.

*Thank you, Lord, for blessing me with a good church and church family.

*Thank you for helping me be a blessing to someone today. We both needed it!

*Thank you, Jesus, for the life that led me to you. Thank you for my faith in you, your love for me, and the hope that I have.

The poem, “Be Thankful”, beautifully describes the meaning of thankfulness.

*Be thankful that you don't have everything
that you desire.*

If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don't know something,

For it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times.

During those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations,

Because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge,

Because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes.

They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you're tired and weary,

Because it means you've made a difference.

It's easy to be thankful for the good things,

A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who

Are also thankful for the setbacks.

Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive.

Find a way to be thankful for your troubles

And they will become your Blessings. – author unknown

We should always count our blessings and be a blessing to others. Our hearts will become lighter and our burdens will be fewer. Plus, our Blessing jars will be overflowing!

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

With this, I pray a prayer of thanks for our blessings to the Lord, our God. Amen.

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Even in the midst of COVID-19

The Good News of Christmas shines bright -- Vickie Donnell, treasurer

The nativity story unfolds in the context of a census, a major stressor for people back then, as COVID-19 is for us. It was most disruptive to the wellbeing of many, including a heavily pregnant Mary and Joseph. What happens in this story is worth our attention for two reasons.

First, God's story takes center stage to Caesar's biggest news to further expand his empire, thereby making the census a haunting subtext.

Secondly, God is the attention-getter for the nativity story as it is all about VULNERABILITY—an infant laying in a manger in the midst of animals, of magi guided by a star and having to share the news about their search for an infant king with a volatile King Herod.

In our vulnerability during this time of COVID-19, we are reminded that God made Himself vulnerable to free us to love our neighbor. This freedom comes with the responsibility of caring for ourselves in order to lovingly care for others. Vulnerability is not weakness. It is

the firmly held belief that Christian love is the impetus for Christian action. This is the good news of Christmas.

During this Advent and Christmas season, live it in Christian love, owning the fact it will be different. First, care for yourself (wear a mask, practice social distancing, and wash your hands) so that you can lovingly care for others as Jesus directed us to love others as ourselves.

"God-with-us, we know this Christmas will be different. We yearn for the experiences we want to have, feelings we want to feel, and friends and family we want to hug. But still, Christmas will come. You will show up in our world and fill us with awe and wonder. You will once again renew our hearts and minds to fully hope, to express unconditional love, to share contagious joy, and find peace—the peace that can only be found in YOU. Amen.

vickiedonnell@yahoo.com

Be blessings to one another -- Kathy Steinke, board member

My hope is that this greeting finds you safe and healthy. This year in St. Louis there will be no in-person worship inside our sanctuary on Christmas Eve. Instead, we will host a "Stations of the Nativity" at 2 p.m. around the perimeter of the church. No Christmas tree, no poinsettias adorning the altar, no hand-held candles during the midnight singing of *Silent Night*. A different year for sure.

My husband and I volunteered to host the Annunciation station with the reading Luke 1:26-45. These passages tell the story of angel Gabriel visiting Mary and telling her she had found favor with the Lord and would bear the son of the Most High. As I reread this passage what spoke to me was Mary's eagerness to visit her pregnant relative, Elizabeth. Mary wanted to share her news with Elizabeth, who did not find her situation confusing at all. Mary shared her story with another woman of faith. What a blessing.

During these dark days of COVID I have reached out to several sisters in Kansas who I have met and

bonded with through my association with Women of the ELCA in the Central States Synod. Cathy Tebow in Courtland, Mary Liby in Osage City, and the Rev. Kim Frederking in Wakeeney, among others, have shared their stories of joy and struggles with me throughout this pandemic, providing essential support and blessing me.

I am looking forward to a new year, where the vaccine will be accessible to all. I am praying that we will be able to safely gather once again in September, as Women of the ELCA in Kansas and Missouri, to share our stories, joy and sorrows, with other strong women of faith. God is in us and with us. I thank God for each of you and your good work.

kathysteinke81@gmail.com

***Jesus Christ, Son of God
The Reason for the Season!***

Central States Synod Women of the ELCA
Educational Scholarship Fund
2021 Award

Please write legibly

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email _____

Home Church _____ City _____ State _____

School Attending (if known) _____

Signature of Applicant _____

Recommended by _____

Guidelines:

1. Scholarships will be awarded to female members of an ELCA congregation seeking post high school education.
2. Priority will be given to female members of the Central States Synod.
3. Award is a 1-year non-renewable scholarship.
4. Scholarship monies will be written to and sent directly to the educational institution you will be attending.
5. Must include a written recommendation and signature from your Pastor, mentor, unit president or unit representative.
Recommendation cannot come from a current or previous board member (within the last four years).
6. Must include an essay of approximately 500 words describing your participation in church, school and the community.
7. Award recipients will be notified in April 2021.
8. Individual awards will not exceed \$1,000. Multiple awards may be given in a year.
9. In the event that your school is undecided at the time of award, it will be your responsibility to keep the CSS Board Treasurer, Vickie Donnell, informed of your selection.
10. **Applications must be postmarked by February 15, 2021.**

Send to: **Loretta Holmes** **Phone 316-260-0965** **lholmes8@sbcglobal.net**
 568 Turtle
 Haysville, KS 67060

Official Newsletter of
The Central States
Women of the ELCA

WALKING IN THE WORD

The newsletter written and published by the
Central States Synod Women of the ELCA

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