

PRAIRIE SPIRIT



Fall 2025

FROM THE BISHOP

One of the highlights of my career as your bishop had very little to do with me.

I had the pleasure of calling the director of Emmaus House my friend. Fr. Tom Kerschen brought to my attention that Emmaus House was struggling. So, this year at convention, I invited my friend from Emmaus House to speak. We arranged a table for Emmaus House to present their information, and Rev. Todd and Susie Ray donated a bottle of Blanton's whiskey for us to auction off in support of Emmaus House.

It is important to know that Emmaus House began as outreach by our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters has since grown into a joint project of the ministerial alliance in Garden City. Emmaus House provides shelter, aid, and food for many and is the only homeless shelter operating in Western Kansas.

I spoke about loving our neighbors during my address at convention. I said that our response to others in need in our communities was the best gauge for how we are doing as followers of Christ. And that is when my participation ended.

What followed is exciting, deeply moving, and, quite frankly, a little disconcerting. The response by the attendees at convention to this need was remarkable. We auctioned that bottle of whiskey. And we auctioned it again. And again. And again. And again. Each time, the winner bidder gave it back to raise more money and more hope for Emmaus House. And every time, you people responded. After the last sale, the bottle was opened and shared there and then by all who wanted to taste it.

The auction was over but that did not stop the giving. People continued to make donations, whatever they could afford, throughout the rest of the convention and beyond. When it was over, you raised almost \$10,000.00 for Emmaus House.

As I said, your response was overwhelming. My friend the director was in tears. And as I watched you all doing the work that God has asked us to do, I was struck with awe.

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Diocese of Western Kansas



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It is not often that one witnesses such a clear sense of the Holy Spirit at work immediately around you, and once one recognizes it as such, that much attention from God is both inspiring and a little frightening.

I am humbled and excited about this diocese and the future of the church here. I am proud of you all. Thank you for all you do.

Christmas for Kids: 25 Years of Making Christmas Special



While Saint Francis has likely been brightening children's holidays for decades, Christmas for Kids (CFK) officially began in 2000 - making this the 25th anniversary of the beloved tradition, celebrated during SFM's 80th year.

Representatives from programs and local offices are serving on the 2025 CFK Committee to ensure that every child and family served by SFM experiences the joy and wonder of the season. This year's campaign again features Hope Tree cards that connect donors directly with children's wishes.

"Christmas for Kids is our longest-running and most visible fundraising campaign," said Ginny Ellis, Executive Director of Development. "Each year, it allows us to share the joy and wonder of Christmas while nurturing relationships across our footprint. It's a busy season and an enormous undertaking that involves nearly every department - but it generates so much hope and good cheer. It's truly a highlight of our year."

Christmas for Kids brings the hope, love, and magic of the season to every child Saint Francis serves – whether in foster care, adoption, residential treatment, independent living, or prevention programs (like Family Centered Treatment®) that support families working hard to stay whole.

The simple act of making a financial contribution or gift-in-kind to Christmas for Kids has the power to transform a child's holiday. A toy, a game, or even a new book isn't just a gift – it's a reminder that they matter, that they are cherished and remembered.

Saint Francis employees look forward to Christmas for Kids every year as an opportunity to bring Christmas joy to the children and families they serve.

The Saint Francis Ministries Foundation has created a Christmas for Kids Toolkit to help parishes and organizations support this year's campaign. The toolkit includes ready-to-use resources such as bulletin inserts, posters, graphics, and information about Hope Tree cards.

To request the toolkit, contact Shaynna Brown at Shaynna.Brown@st-francis.org.

Individuals who wish to share the Light of Christmas with children in care can also contact the Foundation directly at Foundation@st-francis.org.

To learn more or make a donation, <https://saintfrancisministries.org/christmas-for-kids>

The Very Reverend Shay Craig Elected Bishop of the Diocese of North Dakota



On October 25, The Very Reverend Shay Craig was elected as the XII Bishop of the Diocese of North Dakota. With joyful hearts, we extend our sincere congratulations to Mother Shay and give thanks for her faithful service, dedication, and the many gifts she brings to the church and its people. May the Holy Spirit guide her in all things, granting her courage, patience, and joy as she shepherds the Diocese of North Dakota forward. Know that you have the support and heartfelt prayers of the clergy and the people of the Diocese of Western Kansas. Congratulations, Bishop-Elect Craig. May God's grace shine upon you now and always. Mother Shay's last service at the Cathedral will be January 25.

Trinity Episcopal Church Receives a Norton Community Foundation Grant

The Norton County Community Foundation (NCCF) announced it awarded Trinity Episcopal Church \$3,750 in grant funding.

This \$10,000.00 project was completed a few months ago to help preserve the historic 1929 church building by protecting its windows with new UV Lexan coverings. The improvements will safeguard the beautiful stained glass and increase energy efficiency.

For nearly a century, Trinity Episcopal Church has opened its doors to serve the Norton community from providing meeting space for recovery groups to supporting God's Pantry. The Trinity Episcopal Church congregation is very appreciative of the support from the NCCF.



The 5th Sunday loose offering in the Diocese of Western Kansas is a collection taken during worship services on each fifth Sunday throughout the year. The loose offering is designated to support Diocesan youth ministries, such as Acolyte Festival, Youth Convention and support the cost of Youth delegates attending the annual Diocesan Convention. Parishioners are encouraged to contribute as they are able, knowing that these gifts help further the church's mission and extend compassion beyond parish boundaries. Please consider making a generous contribution on the next 5th Sunday, November 30, to support these important efforts.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



The Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas ECW
Presents: "Talitha Kourm: Little Girl, I Say to You, Get Up!"
Women's Retreat | May 1-2, 2026
Keynote Speaker: The Rev. Christine Kass

"Talitha Kourm: Little Girl, I Say to You, Get Up!" is a detailed look at Jesus' relationship with women in the gospels. Despite women being told by the patriarchal church for centuries that they are to remain quiet in church, to not speak, to not even ask questions (until they get home at which point they can ask their husbands whatever questions they have), Jesus does not treat women with such censorship. In fact, a closer look at the gospels shows that Jesus actually empowers women to not only find their own voice but to share his gospel. This presentation will take a deep look at many relationships Jesus had with women, from the woman with the 12-year hemorrhage to Mary and Martha, from the Samaritan woman at the well to Jairus' daughter, to whom he spoke to powerful words, "Talitha kourm," which means "little girl, I say to you, get up!" Today's women will find a renewed sense of who they are as Christians after spending this time taking a fresh look at the gospels and the way Jesus views his female disciples.

Rev. Christine Kass is the pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Hutchinson. A native of Kansas, she moved to New York in 1993 to pursue her under-graduate degree in journalism at New York University. She met and married her husband, Guy, in

New York, and they made their home on the east coast for 27 years.

Christy received her Master of Divinity degree from Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and is currently completing her Doctorate in Ministry at Louisville Theological Seminary.

A proud Gen Xer, she loves Jesus, books, plants, Neil Diamond, really hoppy IPAs, and the KC Royals. The Kassses are foster parents, and also share their home with two cats, Dolly Purton and Reba Smackentire, and their crazy rescue dog, Nori. In her spare time, Pastor Christy makes pottery, and has been known to carry on entire conversations in nothing but Seinfeld quotes.

Save the Dates

Bishop's, Priest, Deacons & Seminarians
May 7-9, 2026 at the Heartland Spiritual Center in Great Bend
Retreat leader: Brother James Dowd OSB.

Brother Dowd founded the Midwest's first Episcopal monastery, Incarnation, in 2018. This monastic enclave which located in northeast Omaha, centers on prayer, service and addressing hunger. Prior of the Benedictine Way in Omaha Instructor in Spirituality at Bishop Kemper School.

Clergy Continuing Education: Pastoral Care/ Mental Health

August 29, 2026

Mental health is an essential aspect of overall well-being, impacting individuals, families, and communities. Clergy play a vital role in supporting the spiritual and emotional needs of their congregations, but they may also face unique mental health challenges themselves. Educating clergy about mental health—both for their personal care and the care of their congregants—can foster healthier, more resilient faith communities.

Workshop Facilitator
The Rev. Kris Paul | Missioner for Wellness and Mental Health in the Diocese of Western Louisiana



Grace Church Sexton Retires

On Sunday, October 5, Grace Church in Hutchinson, celebrated Laura Southards retirement. Laura was Grace's Sexton for almost 8 years. Her last day was September 11. Laura, her husband, Fred, and her family joined the celebration during fellowship hour for cake, a card shower and well-wishes. Sending Laura many retirement blessings.



DIOCESE HIRES NEW ASSISTANT



Shannon Martinez has been hired by the diocese as the new part-time Administrative Assistant. Shannon started at the diocese on October 20. Shannon is a member of Grace Church in Hutchinson. Shannon Martinez was born and raised in Hutchinson, Kansas. After working in business as an office manager and in payroll, she pursued a nursing degree in McPherson and later served in both hospital and clinic settings before retiring. She has spent ten years at the Sheriff's Office in the Offender Registration Unit. Now retired, she works part-time in the office of the Diocese. Shannon now spends more time with her husband John, their children, and grandchildren. As a longtime person of faith, in the past, she has served as a lay Eucharistic Minister and hopes now, with more time on her hands, she can be more involved in her church again. Please join us in welcoming Shannon to the diocesan office.

The Diocese of Western Kansas Receives Seed Grants for New Episcopal Communities

Seed grants for up to \$30,000—fund early exploration and testing of new ministry ideas. Awarded Grants:

Iglesia San Andrés, Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas: \$15,000 (St. Andrew's, Liberal)

Iglesia San Tomas, Episcopal Diocese of Western Kansas: \$15,000 (St. Thomas, Garden City)

Rooted in Resolutions A045 and A046 from the 81st General Convention, New Episcopal Community grants reflect investments in leaders and communities who are reimagining how the church lives and proclaims the Gospel in new settings, including in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts.



BISHOP MILLIKEN CELEBRATES 52 YEARS OF ORDAINED MINISTRY



The Rt. Rev. Michael Milliken will celebrate 52 years as an ordained priest. Bishop Milliken graduated from the University of Kentucky in 1970 with a bachelor's degree and then from the Episcopal

Theological Seminary in Kentucky in 1973 with a Masters of Divinity. He was ordained to the diaconate on May 26, 1973, and then to the priesthood on November 30, 1973, the Feast of St. Andrew. In 1998 Father Milliken and his wife Kathy moved to Hutchinson, Kansas where he took over the position as Rector of Grace Episcopal Church. On February 19, 2011, Bishop Milliken was consecrated as the Fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Western Kansas by The Most Reverend Kathrine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of the Episcopal Church. Bishop Milliken retired on December 31, 2014, but is still active in the Diocese as our Assisting Bishop. Blessings Bishop Mike!

St. Annes Donates Around 40 Blankets to the Rosebud Lakota Reservation

Submitted by Rev. Shane Schneider

When the people of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in McPherson learned about Grace's blanket drive for the Rosebud Lakota Reservation in South Dakota, they didn't hesitate to get involved. Though small in number, the congregation rallied together and donated around 40 blankets and handmade quilts—25 of which came from Lana Chaney's Friday sewing group.



The Rev. Bill Waln blesses the blankets during a service at St. Anne's

"We meet each week at Stitches Quilt Store here in McPherson to sew," says Lana. "There are 12 of us who share a love for quilting, and we hope that those at Rosebud will feel wrapped in love and warmth through our work."

Other members, like Barb Stuart, used their talents to crochet hats and scarves for elders and children on the reservation. And Lana's group isn't stopping there—they plan to keep sewing smaller quilts for children throughout the winter. These will be shipped directly to the Rev. Dr. Lauren Stanley, Canon to the Ordinary for the Diocese of South Dakota, to be distributed to families in need.

Organized by Eileen Porter, the effort has become a greater blessing than any of us could have anticipated. It stands as yet another sign of the Holy Spirit's presence at Grace and St. Anne's—and a reminder of the remarkable good we can accomplish together when we seek to ease suffering and uphold the dignity and worth of our brothers and sisters.

Episcopal Church Offers Advent and Christmas

Individuals, congregations, and small groups can download Advent- and Christmas-themed graphics, a customizable video, curriculum, children's offerings, podcasts, and much more from The Episcopal Church's annual resource page. See individual listings on the page for resources available in Spanish. Participate in Forward Movement's [AdventWord](#), an online Advent calendar that asks individuals, ministries, and congregations to reflect on a single word each day of Advent.

Additional resources include the following:

- Customizable Advent promotional video for your congregation
- Artwork from Episcopalian artists depicting Advent and Christmas collects
- United Thank Offering Christmas gratitude game and printable letter to Santa and more.

You can go to the Episcopal Church website to see all advent resources:

<https://www.episcopalchurch.org/advent-and-christmas-resources>



On October 18, Father Jeff Mitchell, of St. Andrew's Church in Liberal, presided over his first Quinceañera of Annalee Yareli. Quinceañera is a cultural and ceremonial celebration marking a young girl's 15th birthday, symbolizing her transition from childhood to womanhood, combining historical traditions, family, faith, and community support. Also pictured is Jedidiah Montalvo, Latino Missioner in Liberal.



On November 1, Father Cameron Randle presided over a Compline Service (Compleatas) for Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead).

"Guíanos, Señor, despiertos, y guárdanos mientras dormimos."

"Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping"

People brought photos of departed loved ones for the ofrenda (altar) and share memories.

The Rev. Ben Houchen Shares Ministry with the Presbyterian Church

First Presbyterian Church in Hays, had been without a pastor December 2024. Their leaders reached out to the Vicar of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, The Rev. Ben Houchen, about becoming their new pastor. One of the challenges of pastoring three churches, of course, involves logistics. Houchen said the three churches will continue to have separate worship services in their respective buildings. But all their worship times have changed.

First Presbyterian now meets at 9 a.m. Sundays, St. Michael's meets at 11 a.m. Sundays, and St. Andrew's meets at 1 p.m. Sundays.

St. Michaels is excited about what this will bring about in Hays.

You can read the full article in the Hays Post:

<https://hayspost.com/posts/4495d84e-4461-4e74-abbf-3d1cco84d3c1>





CONVENTION WRAP-UP



The 55th Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of Western Kansas was held in Dodge City, with Grace Church in Hutchinson as our hosts. Living our Mission: Acceptance, Understanding and Fellowship was this year's theme. Living our mission of acceptance, understanding, and fellowship is a call to cultivate a society where mutual respect and genuine connections thrive. These principles are the foundation for building bridges between diverse groups, fostering trust, and creating an environment where everyone feels valued. This mission is not just a statement but a lifestyle that empowers individuals to embrace differences and seek common ground.

The Convention brought together clergy, delegates, and lay members from across the diocese, where we took care of the business of the convention as well as sharing in worship, fellowship, and the ongoing mission of the church in Western Kansas.

The Jerry Jones Memorial Bishops Cup was held on Thursday, October 16, at Mariah Hills Golf Club. It was a fun tournament. \$1,065.00 was raised to benefit the Bishop's Fund. The Prize winners were:

The Bishops Cup Winner: Team of Jeff & Jacki Mitchell, Bishop Mike Milliken and Toni Cottrell

Longest Drive-Ladies: The Rev. Karen Lemon

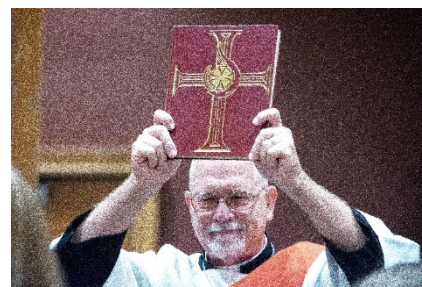
Longest Drive-Men: Marc Kliewer

Longest Putt: JD Montalvo

Closest to the Pin: Toni Cottrell

Best Kilt: Bishop Mark Cowell (the only one wearing a kilt)





The Opening Eucharist was held in Dodge City at The Boot Hill Conference Center, with The Rt. Rev. Mark Cowell gave the Bishops Address and celebrated as well. Grace Episcopal Church was the host and participated in the service. The Convention Choir, led by Kerry Kuplic, lent their beautiful voices.

Elections and Appointments for Diocesan Committee positions were held. The results were:

Trustees for the Diocese of Western Kansas:

The Rev. Todd Ray (1year term)

The Rev. Chris Seaton

Mrs. Kathleen Malone Crouch

Incumbents: The Rev. Shay Craig, The Rev. Cameron Randle, Mrs. Carolyn Peterson, Mr. Butch Pyle and Mrs. Nan Pyle

Commission on Ministry:

The Rev. Ben Houchen

The Rev. Donald Martin (Appointed by the Bishop)

Mrs. Jennifer Higgins

Mrs. Sara Kirkhart (Appointed by the Bishop)

Incumbents: The Rev. Todd Ray, The Rev. Scott Mentzer, Mrs. Margie Prewitt, Mrs. Debra Mentzer

The Disciplinary Board (Appointed by the Bishop)

The Rev. Canon Cameron Randle

Mrs. Toni Cottrell

Incumbents: The Rev. John Seatvet, The Rev. Todd Ray, Mr. John Houston, The Rev. Karen Lemon, Mr. Steve Fontaine

Congratulations to all who are willing to serve in the Diocese!

DIOCESE RAISES OVER \$9,000.00 FOR GARDEN CITY EMMAUS HOUSE

Submitted by Shane Schneider

One of the most memorable moments of the 55th Convention took place during the banquet, following a moving presentation by Emmaus House Executive Director Brittney Knoll. Located in Garden City, Emmaus House is the only active homeless shelter in Western Kansas, providing 34 beds and serving thousands each year through its soup kitchen and food bank. In the past year alone, the ministry offered a safe place to sleep for 226 men, women, and children and served nearly 170,000 hot meals. Yet, Brittney shared that the number of people



seeking assistance has risen sharply. With no government funding, Emmaus House relies entirely on the generosity of local churches and the community to keep its doors open. "People are often forced into homelessness by circumstances beyond their control," Brittney explained. "They come to us because they are down on their luck, struggling with addiction, or facing mental health challenges. Some have lost everything to fire or crushing medical debt."

As soon as Brittney finished speaking, Bishop Cowell stepped forward, holding a bottle of Blanton's bourbon, and announced an auction to benefit Emmaus House. Within thirty minutes, six bidders had each won—and then donated—the bottle back to be auctioned again. When the final bid closed, the spirited fundraiser had brought in \$5,400. The last bidder, The Reverend Bill Waln, generously shared the bottle with the gathering. Additional gifts collected throughout the Convention brought the total raised to \$9,300.00.

Other bidders included The Reverend Scott Mentzer, Marc and Kim Kliever, The Reverend Todd Ray, The Very Reverend Shay Craig, and The Reverend Jeff and Jacki Mitchell.

Thanks to the generosity of the Diocese of Western Kansas and the dedication of Brittney and her team, Emmaus House can continue—at least for now—to serve as a physical and spiritual refuge for all who seek shelter and hope.

To learn more or support their mission, visit [Emmaus House on Facebook](#).



CONVENTION FUNDRAISERS

We have said it more than once, we have some of the most generous people in our diocese! Thank You! Here are the totals raised at our various fund raising during the convention:

Bishop's Cup \$1,065.00

Convention Offering (JD Montalvo Mission Fund) \$402.00

ECW Basket Raffle \$1,114.00

Emmaus House \$9,300.00

UTO \$3,668.54



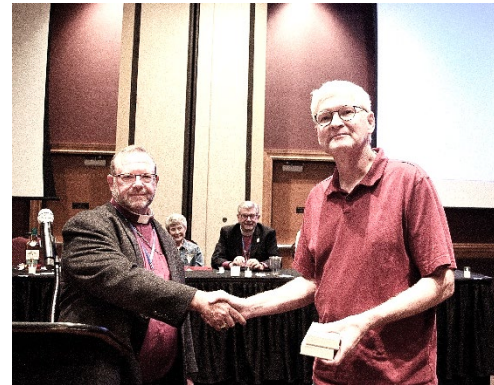
BISHOP'S CROSS RECIPIENTS



The Rev. Harvey Hillin received a Bishop's Cross for his many years of donating his time and travel to be a supply clergy across the diocese.

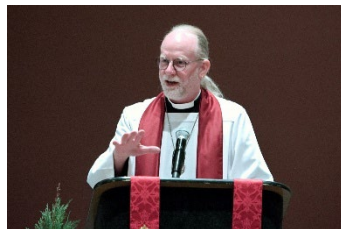
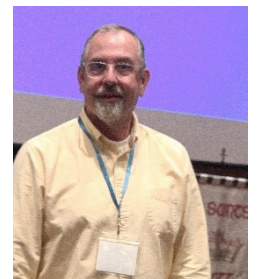
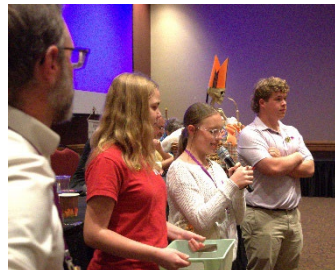
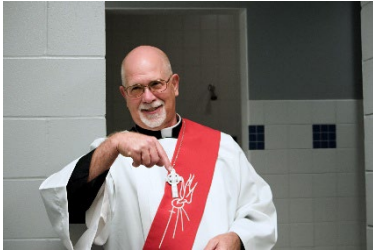


Linda Hamilton, who is a member of Saints Mary and Martha in Larned, for many years has organized their annual clothing drives.



Deacons Scott Mentzer and Pat Schiefen, From St. Paul's in Goodland, selflessly stepped up to cover services in Norton at Trinity Church after the passing of their Vicar Dennis Gilhousen.

Faces of Convention



You can see all the Convention Photos at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/89892904@N06/albums/72177720329995675/>



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Give Thanks for God's abundant blessings

