

CALLING A BISHOP

A Guide to Prepare for the 2020 Northeastern Iowa Synod Assembly

INTRODUCTION

Electing a bishop is one of the most important decisions made by assemblies of this church. We depend upon the ministry of bishops to provide leadership, vision, wisdom, guidance, public witness, and pastoral care.

THE MINISTRY OF A BISHOP

As ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, bishops are called as pastors of a synod or of this church. Bishops, therefore, are persons who adhere to our Lutheran confessional understanding of the Christian faith.

The ministry of a synodical bishop is described carefully in provision 10.31. of the ELCA churchwide constitution and in Chapter 8, provision †S8.12 and following, in the *Constitution for Synods*. “As this synod’s pastor,” the bishop is called to oversee, administer, preach, provide pastoral care, advise, exercise leadership, ordain, advocate, interpret, and serve as synodical ecumenical officer. This work takes shape within the mission goals, context, and structure of each synod. The individual serving as bishop also shapes the office.

As you approach the election of a bishop, consider:

- *What are this synod’s priorities for ministry?*
- *What are our greatest challenges, opportunities, resources and liabilities?*
- *Where do we want to be in the next five to 10 years?*
- *What priorities and emphases do we have for leadership?*
- *What qualities, experiences, skills and leadership styles would serve us best?*

WHO MAY SERVE AS A BISHOP

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* and the *Constitution for Synods* state that the presiding bishop and the synodical bishop “shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.” (See churchwide constitutional provision 13.21. and synodical constitutional provision †S8.11.). There are no further requirements or limitations. Thus,

we may nominate from a pool of 16,001 Ministers of Word and Sacrament, as of Dec. 31, 2018.

In addition to a deep and abiding faith commitment, pastors who might serve as bishop will need to have broad skills in pastoral care and preaching, administrative leadership, and the ability to lift up a vision for the this church and its ministry. Pastors who serve in all the various arenas of ministry throughout this church—congregations, agencies, institutions, and synodical and churchwide staff—have gifts and skills that may commend them for consideration in the calling of a new bishop.

BISHOP ELECTION PROCESS

The election of the bishop takes place during the synod assembly. The Northeastern Iowa Synod uses an ecclesiastical ballot, which means there are no verbal or written nominations made in advance of the first ballot.

PRAYERS AND CONVERSATIONS

We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout the election process. Some people are more comfortable seeking that counsel individually, keeping their thoughts private and not speaking about the process. Some people discern the spirit’s guidance in conversation and debate with others. They feel comfortable telling others what they think and inviting others to join them in those convictions.

Regardless of which process is used, all who engage in discussion should exercise great care to do so in a pattern of prayerful reflection, education, and Spirit-led deliberation which avoids divisiveness and the appearance of campaigning or political advocacy. The counsel of the Holy Spirit is granted to God’s people in a variety of settings. We can trust the Holy Spirit to be active in our private deliberations and in our conversations with others as we seek God’s wisdom and guidance.

As the people of God, we prayerfully enter into this process of discernment and deliberation. The election of a bishop marks the beginning of a new or renewed partnership in ministry. In the days ahead, be diligent in your own faithful and creative service to God’s people and God’s world, and work together in honesty and trust.



CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS RELATED TO THE ELECTION OF THE SYNOD BISHOP

Updated to include amendments to the Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America by the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, August 2019.

S8.10. Bishop

†S8.11. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

†S8.12. As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall:

- a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.
- b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service.
- c. Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synodical bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
- d. Ordain (or provide for the ordination of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service of this church.
- e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in the synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.
- f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.
- g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:

- 1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;
 - 2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;
 - 3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod;
 - 4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning the synod's life and work; and
 - 5) Advise and counsel this synod's related institutions and organizations.
- h. Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church and in so doing:
- 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church;
 - 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod;
 - 3) Be the chief ecumenical officer of this synod;
 - 4) Be a member of the Conference of Bishops and consult regularly with other synod bishops;
 - 5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;
 - 6) Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod; and
 - 7) Be ex officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.
- i. Oversee and administer the work of this synod and in so doing:
- 1) Serve as the president of the synod corporation and be the chief executive and administrative



officer of this synod, who is authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to sign deeds or other instruments and to affix the seal of this synod;

- 2) Preside at all meetings of the Synod Assembly and provide for the preparation of the agenda for the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, and the council's Executive Committee;
- 3) Ensure that the constitution and bylaws of the synod and of the churchwide organization are duly observed within this synod, and that the actions of the synod in conformity therewith are carried into effect;
- 4) Exercise supervision over the work of the other officers;
- 5) Coordinate the work of all synod staff members;
- 6) Appoint all committees for which provision is not otherwise made;
- 7) Be a member of all committees and any other organizational units of the synod, except as otherwise provided in this constitution;
- 8) Provide for preparation and maintenance of synod rosters containing the names and addresses of all rostered ministers of this synod and a record of the calls under which they are serving or the date on which their retired or disability status took effect;
- 9) Annually bring to the attention of the Synod Council the names of all rostered ministers on leave from call or engaged in approved graduate study in conformity with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church and pursuant to prior action of this synod through the Synod Council;
- 10) Provide for prompt reporting to the secretary of this church of:
 - a) additions to and subtractions from the rosters of this synod;
 - b) the issuance of certificates of transfer for rostered ministers in good standing who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested, regular letter of call

under the jurisdiction of another synod;
and

- c) the entrance of the names of such persons for whom proper certificates of transfer have been received;
- 11) Provide for preparation and maintenance of a roster of the congregations of this synod and the names of the laypersons who have been elected to represent them; and
- 12) Appoint a statistician of the synod, who shall secure the parochial reports of the congregations and make the reports available to the secretary of this church for collation, analysis, and distribution of the statistical summaries to this synod and the other synods of this church.

S8.50. General Provisions

†S8.51. The terms of office of the officers of this synod shall be:

- a. The bishop of this synod shall be elected to a term of six years and may be re-elected.

CHAPTER 9

S9.04. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the three persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the third ballot, and 60 percent of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot.

ABOUT THE NORTHEASTERN IOWA SYNOD

The Northeastern Iowa Synod of the ELCA is made up of 145 congregations, one synodically authorized worshipping community and more than 69,278 baptized members walking together to strengthen the witness and service of the whole church. In addition, one ELCA seminary and two ELCA-affiliated colleges are located within the Northeastern Iowa Synod, as well as two outdoor Bible camp ministries and a campus ministry.

Synod ministries support and develop congregational leaders through colleague groups, first-call theological education, retreats, ministry networks, online resources, events, consultations and more.

Congregations are supported through consultations, educational programs, cooperative ministries, assemblies, mission projects, networking opportunities, youth programs, online support, disaster response, and synod-wide events.



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