



SOUTHWESTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD, ELCA

Bishop Election 2021

April 2021 Updates

The election of a bishop in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA is a Call Process inside of a Synod Assembly election. As members of the Bishop Election Committee, it is our goal to approach this work and election process with care and prayer, respecting the way the Holy Spirit will be at work in the discernment by those who stand for election, and those who serve as voting members to the Assembly. We anticipate that a process is in place that has integrity and is worthy of your trust and respect. A timeline of the process is available on the Synod website, and we pray it will help to guide us through the coming days and weeks with clarity and honor for all who are involved in our shared work. We are grateful for your prayers and support for the tasks at hand.

Biographical Information on Pre-Identified Pastors for Bishop

As of April 9, 2021 the names and submitted biographical information for eight ELCA pastors who have been pre-identified by individuals, congregations, or conferences are posted on the Southwestern Minnesota Synod website. These pastors are not automatically considered to be nominees for bishop, as their names still need to be officially placed by a voting member on the first, Ecclesiastical Ballot which will occur on the afternoon of Sunday, June 6, 2021. Additional names of ELCA pastors in good standing who have not been pre-identified may also be placed on that Ecclesiastical Ballot for consideration in the election process.

Additional Ways to Become Better Acquainted with Pre-Identified Pastors for Bishop

In the coming weeks, those pastors who have been pre-identified and submitted biographical information will be provided additional questions to which they will be asked to respond. These questions, developed by the Bishop Election Committee, will be asked of the pastors and will be shared online as recorded six minute videos. The same questions will be posed to all eight pastors, and their answers will be limited to the same number of minutes for response. The interviewer will be consistent for all, as we strive for equity and fairness, transparency and integrity in our bishop election process. The goal is to post these videos by May 1, 2021.

In addition, an online link will be available prior to the Synod Assembly for members of the Synod to submit questions they would like to address to those nominated on the Ecclesiastical Ballot on June 6, 2021 and among the top seven nominees after the second ballot that evening. The Bishop Election Committee will be preparing questions for the nominees to answer during the week of June 6th, and again when our balloting gets down to the top three nominees. Your name and congregational membership and voting member status must be on the question form when it is submitted.

Leadership Traits and Gifts for a Synod Bishop

As we approach the 2021 Southwestern Minnesota Synod Assembly where we will elect the next bishop of this Synod, we want to remind you to check on the Synod's website under the Bishop Election tab to find helpful materials for your discernment.

In the Study Guide that was prepared last fall for congregational and individual use, there was a list of General Characteristics, Traits and Gifts to Consider for the Role of Bishop. These leadership qualities are posted below once again for your use:

Has deep faith

Loves the church

Has been an effective congregational leader

Has pastoral presence

Is theologically grounded

Is focused on God's mission for God's church

Speaks for the poor and marginalized

Possesses emotional maturity and compassion while able to navigate criticism (thick skin)

Is a team builder and stewards human resources well

Models patience and resilience

Is a good listener and is approachable

Is a lifelong learner and teacher

Is flexible and receptive to change

Is able to discern priorities and act accordingly

Is a truth teller in love

Possesses humor, humility, graciousness

Is trustworthy, honest, and acts with integrity

Has significant intercultural awareness and experience and sensitivity

Is courageous

Possesses administrative skills

Has ability to delegate

Likes to travel (in non-COVID realities)

Can balance work and life

Brings wisdom, insights, and understands the complexity of the church

Is not seduced by the title of bishop, doesn't let ego get in the way of the calling

Has sound and healthy home life and relationships

Is able to speak as a public figure

Has strong communication skills – verbal and written

Is well-informed about the world around us

Understands parliamentary procedure

Is skilled at running efficient meetings

Over the course of the past months, there have been additional online zoom opportunities for lay and rostered leaders to learn about the calling to the Office of Bishop from those who have served as a Synod Bishop in SWMN and elsewhere in our region. These voices included Charles Anderson, Jon Anderson, Stan Olson, Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl, Peter Rogness, Peter Strommen, and Larry Wohlrabe. Many of the traits listed above were expanded upon by these past and current leaders. These zoom conversations were recorded and may be accessed on the Synod website.

Former SW MN Synod Bishop Reflections from Feb. 9, 2021.

[Click here to view the recording.](#) Access Passcode: Synod3F#

Former Bishop Reflections from Jan. 25, 2021.

[Click here to view the recording.](#) Access Passcode: Synod3F#

Constitutional Responsibilities of the Bishop

Our Southwestern Minnesota Synod Constitution also has an extensive list of responsibilities of the bishop that are related to the oversight and governance of this Synod and to relationships with congregations, pastors and other entities. This list of responsibilities may be found online (swmnelca.org) in the Synod Constitution in Chapter S8.12.

A synod bishop, even though elected by a particular Synod Assembly, is issued a Letter of Call from the ELCA Churchwide organization. An elected bishop will become a member of the ELCA Conference of Bishops, and will work in partnership with the Churchwide governance and ELCA Constitution of God's church.

Prayer Resources for Congregations and Individuals

In the final weeks leading up to the 2021 Synod Assembly, we encourage you to be in prayer in your congregations and homes, that the Spirit will breathe life into and guide our bishop election process, our Synod Assembly, and stir in the heart of the pastor who will be called through an election to serve as the Synod Bishop of Southwestern Minnesota Synod.

We invite you to use these prayers in intentional ways in the coming weeks:

- Direct us, Lord God, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and extend to us your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name; and finally, by your mercy, bring us to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (from ELW)
- Dear Lord, may we continue to listen for your call and be willing to answer "Here I am, Lord, is it I, Lord...I will go Lord, if you lead me." Help us to go about doing the work of your church with open hearts and open minds, knowing that all things begin and end in you, to the glory of your holy name, we pray. Amen.

- Gracious God, in the midst of a world filled with uncertainty, remind us of the certainty of your abiding presence in our daily lives. As we look toward the election of a bishop in Southwestern Minnesota Synod, guide our thinking and our discernment, our mutual encouragement and holy conversations. Open our ears to listen to your voice and the voices of those around us who care for your Church. Grant us wisdom for this time in our synod. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.
- Loving God, we continue to be physically distanced from one another but we trust that you are always near. Be in the midst of all that we do and say, and direct our online meetings, our outdoor gatherings, and our restricted times of being face-to-face. You have abundantly bestowed your gifts to us, gifts of faith, hope, and love. Gifts of human resources, skills, talents, and vision. Help us consider all these gifts as we patiently wait to see where your Holy Spirit will lead in our Bishop Election process. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.
- Almighty God, we pray for all who lead us in faith. Bless with wisdom and discernment those who are potential nominees for the office of Bishop in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod. Stir up the hearts of your people who are called to leadership and oversight for the coming years. Help us follow your will and to do that which is pleasing in your sight, giving glory to you in all we do. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.
- Nurturing God, work in the hearts of your people, lay and rostered, to discern your will for the present and future ministry you call us to share in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod. We will be electing a bishop in the coming weeks, O God, and we pray fervently for that person, known only to you. We trust you are at work in this holy process of discernment, nomination, and election. For this, we are grateful and give you our praise. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.
- Holy and living God, you call pastors to bring us your creative and redeeming word. Equip the one who will be called to serve as bishop in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod, that this servant may have the gifts of ministry you desire for your church in these days. Guide the discernment required for those who will be nominated, and for those who will serve as voting members of the Assembly. May your vision enlighten us all in the work you have called us to share in your name. Amen.
- God our creator, throughout the ages your unchanging purpose has created people to love and serve you. Through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son, Jesus, you reveal your never-failing love for all your beloved community. Empower and surround with love your servant who will be elected and called to the Office of Bishop in the Southwestern Minnesota Synod. Holy Spirit, meet us in these days that our words and actions might be pleasing in your sight, and bring glory to your holy name. Amen.