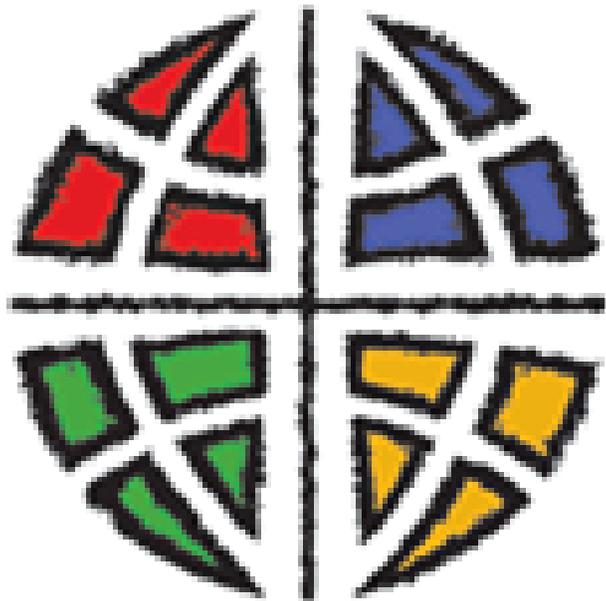


# **Our Next Bishop**

**A Study Guide and Survey for  
Congregations, Conferences,  
Groups and Individuals**



**La Crosse Area Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

**2019-2020**

# **Our Next Bishop: A Study Guide and Survey for Congregations, Conferences, Groups and Individuals**

La Crosse Area Synod (ELCA)  
2019-2020

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## INTRODUCTION – HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This packet is intended to inform all members of our Synod about the Office of Bishop *and* about the many missions supported by our Synod. It includes a study guide on the Office of the Bishop through history *and also* a “Synod Survey Response Form”. The Survey Form poses broad questions, meant to help us gather our thoughts about the mission and character of our Synod *and* of our next bishop, focusing our discernment in the upcoming election.

The Study Guide is organized into four parts with three appendices.

**Part One** shows us how the role of “bishop” has developed over the centuries.

**Part Two** summarizes the contemporary viewpoints about the role of a bishop.

**Part Three** gives us an overview of the many missions our Synod nurtures with staff time and the mission support from our congregations.

**Part Four** describes how the election process takes place in our Synod.

**Appendix A** is a statement from the ELCA Council of Bishops discussing their views on the role and responsibilities of synod bishops.

**Appendix B** lists the Synod Constitution’s duties of our Synod’s bishop.

**Appendix C** is a hard-copy of the Synod Survey Response Form

In an effort to make this study accessible in the widest possible range of contexts, we have designed it to be flexible in its use. The following pages offer a variety of ways this resource can be used – as a one-, two- or three-session study.

Thank you for taking the time to learn and pray about the mission and ministries of our Synod. Calling a new bishop is a vital part of our life together. As we continue this discernment together, please feel free to contact any of the Committee members with whatever questions or concerns you may have.

Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Pastor Barbara Bruneau  
Dennis Glaman  
Larry Hoppe  
Pastor Meg Hoversten

Eddie Kim  
Pastor Len Liptack  
Cheryl Mader

Steve McDougal  
Pastor Alyssa Mitchell  
Mark Zellmer

## One-Class Format (45 minutes)

- Open with prayer.
- Introductions – Have participants introduce themselves & share one thing they appreciate about our Synod. (5 minutes)
- State the purpose of the study & of your time together. (2 minutes)
- Overview of the Historical Background. (3 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 1
- Overview of the Office of Bishop. (3 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 2
- Overview of the Ministry of our Synod. (10 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 3.
  - ⇒ In small groups or individually have participants look over Part 3. Have people tell of the ministries they were not aware of before.
- Overview of the Election of a Bishop. (3 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 4
- Questions. (5 minutes)
- Explanation of and time to fill out Survey Form. (10 minutes)
- End with prayer: *Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

## Two-Class Format

### **1<sup>st</sup> Class (45 minutes)**

- Open with prayer.
- Introductions – Have participants introduce themselves & share one thing they appreciate about our synod. (5 minutes)
- State the purpose of the study & of your time together. (2 minutes)
- Discuss participants' view of the role and responsibilities of a bishop. (10 minutes)
- Overview of the Historical Background. (10 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 1
- Overview of the Office of Bishop. (10 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 2
- Questions. (5 minutes)
- End with prayer: *Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Class (45 minutes)**

- Open with prayer.
- Overview of the Ministry of our Synod. (20 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 3.
  - ⇒ In small groups or individually have participants look over Part 3. Have the individuals/groups share synod ministries they are familiar with.
  - ⇒ Have the individuals/groups share any ministries they were unaware of before.
- Overview of the election of a Bishop. (5 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 4
- Read and explain the Survey Response Form together. (5 minutes)
- Fill out Response Form. (10 minutes)
- End with prayer: See Prayer Above.

## Three-Class Format

### **1<sup>st</sup> Class (45 minutes)**

- Open with prayer.
- Introductions – Have participants introduce themselves and share one thing they appreciate about our Synod. (5 minutes)
- State the purpose of the study and of your time together. (2 minutes)
- Discuss participants' view of the role and responsibilities of a bishop. (10 minutes)
- Overview of the Historical Background. (15 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 1
- Questions. (8 minutes)
- End with prayer: See Prayer Above.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Class (45 minutes)**

- Open with prayer.
- Review 1<sup>st</sup> class. (5 minutes)
- Overview of the Office of Bishop in current practice. (20 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 2
  - ⇒ In small groups or all together discuss the following: What role would you like our new bishop to play...
    - ✓ ...in the life of your congregation?
    - ✓ ...in relation to the world-wide church?
    - ✓ ...as a spokesperson for our synod?
- Read and discuss the questions on the Survey Response Form. (5 minutes)
- End with prayer: See Prayer Above.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Class (45 minutes)**

- Open with prayer.
- Review previous classes. (8 minutes)
  - ⇒ Give participants the opportunity to recall what they have learned so far.
  - ⇒ Review the historical development of the bishop: re-read Part 1, especially D and E.
  - ⇒ Review the current role of a bishop: re-read Part 2, especially B.
- Overview of the Ministry of our Synod. (20 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 3.
  - ⇒ In small groups or individually have participants share synod ministries they are familiar with.
  - ⇒ Have them share any ministries they were unaware of before.
- Overview of the election of a bishop. (5 minutes)
  - ⇒ Read Part 4
- Read and discuss questions 6-13 on the Survey Response Form. (2 minutes)
- Fill out remaining sections of the Survey Response Form. (10 minutes)
- End with prayer: See Prayer Above.

## PART ONE – THE OFFICE OF BISHOP: AN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the early church, the Greek word for a bishop was *episkopos*. This word meant literally “overseer,” and it was used that way in secular contexts. Over time, the word came to mean the highest order of Christian ministers in the Church. In the present day, the term is still used in many

Christian traditions: the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the churches of the Anglican Communion including the Church of England and the U.S. Episcopal Church, Methodist churches, and among many Lutheran denominations around the world.

### A. The Roles of *Episkopos* (Bishop/Overseer) and *Presbyteros* (Elder/Pastor/Priest) in the New Testament

*Episkopos* (and related words) occur eight times in the New Testament always designating a leadership role in the early church. In the book of Acts, this role seems to overlap with the role of elder/pastor/priest (*presbyteros*).<sup>1</sup> In the Pastoral Epistles (1,2 Timothy and Titus), it is possible to distinguish the roles of *presbyteros* and *episkopos*. Some scholars speculate

that an “elder” was a leader of a Christian community while a “bishop” was the host of a house church. 1Timothy suggests that some elders were primarily responsible for preaching and teaching<sup>2</sup>, while the more stringent qualifications for a bishop/overseer suggest an elevated position of leadership.<sup>3</sup>

### B. Formation of the Office of Bishop in the Early Church

The office of bishop took shape as the early church faced many challenges to its survival. In times of persecution, bishops played key roles in promoting unity among the Christian communities spread throughout the Roman Empire. When some Christians began adding new teachings to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, bishops became an important link to the ministry

and teaching of Jesus and the early Christian Community. In the third and fourth centuries, bishops played critical roles in refining the church's theology about the Trinity, the natures of Christ, and the necessity of Grace for Salvation. Now, in early Christian communities, the Bishop became

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, *Bishop*, and *Orders and Ordination*.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim 5:17: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

<sup>3</sup> 1Tim 3:1-7: “The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and

not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way— for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.”

- **A Source of UNITY Among Christians:** When the early Christians were faced with persecution, the bishops helped reinforce the unity of believers, strengthening their resolve. On his journey to be executed in Rome, Ignatius wrote to many churches and bishops. He repeatedly emphasized the need for Christians to stay united with their bishop, and he exhorted the bishop Polycarp to “Focus on unity, for there is nothing better.”<sup>4</sup>
- **A Source of CONTINUITY with the Teaching of Jesus:** The heresies of Marcionism and Gnosticism made claims of special knowledge (Gnostics) or authority (Marcion).<sup>5</sup> In his work refuting Marcion and Gnostic heresies, Irenaeus, the Bishop

of Lyons, emphasized the rule of faith and chain of transmission of faith from Jesus to the Apostles to the bishops.

- **A Source of AUTHORITY for the Church's Teaching:** In the third and fourth centuries, the church faced numerous heresies related to the Trinity, the nature of Christ, and the role of God's Grace in Salvation. The responses to these heresies highlighted the bishop's role in defining doctrine. Many prominent bishops – especially Bishops Athanasius of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, and Gregory of Nyssa – were at the forefront in combating these heresies and in the decisions of the early ecumenical councils of the church.

### C. The Office of Bishop in the Lutheran Confessions

The Lutheran Reformers, led by Martin Luther, faced a dilemma in filling pulpits with pastors who preached the Gospel and knew the Scriptures. While the Reformers intended to remain a reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church, many Roman Catholic bishops refused to ordain pastors who followed the Reformers' theology. It was necessary, therefore, for fellow pastors to perform many of the oversight functions of a bishop.

From: *Apology to the Augsburg Confession 14,1* – “We have frequently testified in the assembly that it is our greatest desire to retain the order of the church and the various ranks in the church – even though

they were established by human authority.”

*Apology 14,5* – “Moreover, we want to point out again that we would willingly retain ecclesiastical and canonical order as long as the bishops desisted from their cruelty against our churches. This willingness will be our defense, both before God and among all nations, present and future, against the charge that we have undermined the authority of the bishops.”

*Apology 28,12* – “Therefore, bishops have the power of their order, namely, the ministry of Word and sacraments. They also have the power of jurisdiction, namely, the authority to excommunicate those who

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<sup>4</sup> “Flee from divisions, as the beginning of evils. You must all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father...It is good to acknowledge God and the bishop. The one who honors the bishop has been honored by God; the one who does anything without the bishop's knowledge serves the devil.” (Ignatius, *To the Smyrneans* 8, 9); “Do justice to your office with constant care for both physical and spiritual concerns. Focus on unity, for there is nothing better.” (Ignatius, *To Polycarp*, 1)

<sup>5</sup> Marcion claimed that the God of the Old Testament was a God of law and judgment diametrically opposed to the New Testament God of Jesus Christ who was a God of love. Thus, Marcion took it upon himself to create his own canon of Scripture which included none of the Old Testament, some of the letters of Paul, and an edited version of the Gospel of Luke. The term “Gnostics” describes a broad group of heresies that claimed to have secret teachings from Jesus about the nature of salvation and humanity which were shared only among an elite group of believers.

are guilty of public offenses or to absolve them if they are repentant and ask for absolution... Bishops have a definite command, a definite Word of God, which they

ought to teach and according to which they ought to exercise their jurisdiction.”

## D. “Bishops” in the ELCA's Predecessor Bodies

### American Lutheran Church (ALC)

The ALC was mainly made up of congregations with Norwegian, German, and Danish backgrounds. Most of the congregations currently in our Synod were ALC congregations.<sup>6</sup> This denomination referred to geographical divisions as “*districts*” and its overseers as “*district presidents*”. The duties of the district president were supervisory and advisory. The job description included administrative and pastoral oversight of the ministers, congregations, and conferences within the district. The district president was called to authorize ordinations and installations, mediate disputes between pastors and

congregations, and was charged with promoting the financial support for the mission of the ALC.<sup>7</sup>

### Lutheran Church in America (LCA)

The LCA was mainly made up of congregations with Swedish, Danish, and Finnish backgrounds. It referred to its overseers as “bishops” and its geographical divisions as “synods”. The duties of the Office of the Bishop consisted of the administration of the synod, overseeing the functioning of its various committees, and the ordination and installation of pastors. The bishop was also authorized to act as the president of the synod in the legal transactions of the synod, to conduct meetings, and to be a representative to other institutions on behalf of the synod.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Only English, La Crosse and Good Shepherd, La Crosse were from the LCA at the time the ELCA was created and our Synod organized in 1988.

<sup>7</sup> From the *ALC District Constitution*: “The district president shall: 1. Have supervision over the clergy, congregations, and conferences of the district. 2. Serve as counselor to the clergy and lay church staff workers of the district. 3. Serve as an advisory member on the Church Council and of General Conventions of The American Lutheran Church. 4. Assist congregations in calling pastors and in securing interim pastoral service. 5. Authorize ordination and installation of candidates who have been approved by the Church Council and who have accepted calls to congregations within the district. 6. Mediate in disputes involving congregations and/or pastors. 7. Convene and be responsible for the chairing of the district conventions. 8. Be an advisory member of all district committees other than the district committee on Appeals and Adjudication. 9. Submit to the district and to the general president of this Church a comprehensive annual report, containing a record of official acts and a survey of conditions within the district. 10. Nominate persons to authorized staff positions in the district and supervise the work of

the district staff. 11. Stimulate the congregations of the district to provide financial support for the mission of this Church in cooperation with the Office of Communication and Mission Support.”

<sup>8</sup> From the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), *Model Synod Constitution*: “The bishop shall: 1. Exercise supervision over the congregations, ordained ministers, and agencies of the synod. 2. Preside at all conventions of the synod and shall be its chief executive officer; see to it that the constitution [and bylaws] of the synod are duly observed. 3. Visit the congregations of the synod and confer and advise with them concerning their spiritual and temporal welfare; and counsel with the ordained ministers as their pastor. 4. Ordain all accepted candidates for the ministry, or provide for their ordination and installation. 5. Be ex officio a member of all committees of the synod, and its chief representative in the boards of directors or trustees of all institutions on which the synod is entitled to representation. The bishop shall be a member of and shall chair the synodical delegation to each convention of the Lutheran Church in America. 6. Be the president of the corporation and be authorized and empowered, in car-

## PART TWO – THE OFFICE OF BISHOP: CURRENT PRACTICE

### A. The Role of Bishops Described in Ecumenical Conversations:

#### World Council of Churches, “Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry”

“*Bishops* preach the Word, preside at the sacraments, and administer discipline in such a way as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the Church. They have pastoral oversight of the area to which they are called. They serve the apostolicity and unity of the Church’s teaching, worship and sacramental life. They have responsibility for leadership in the Church’s mission. They relate the Christian community in their area to the wider Church, and the universal Church to their community. They, in communion with the presbyters and deacons and the whole community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church.”

#### United Methodist Church, “On Episcopacy” (*excerpts*)<sup>9</sup>

- “All aspects of ministry are to be judged by the question: do they further the fundamental mission of the Spirit within the Church?”

- “Every church must find ways in which oversight of ordained ministry can be exercised. This oversight is concerned with all aspects of ordained ministry: its administrative organization, its faithfulness to the mission of Christ, the pastoral care it gives and receives.”

- “Bishops are themselves ordained ministers. United Methodists and Lutherans

understand the distinctive ministry of the bishop to be a form of the single ordained ministry.”

- “As persons called to oversee and exercise the ordained ministry, bishops in their total ministry should serve the unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity of the church.”

- “In their preaching and teaching, bishops serve the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church.”

- “As their ministry of oversight focuses on the pure preaching and teaching of the gospel, bishops serve the unity of the Church.”

- “In the witness to the gospel of grace of God which they share with all Christians and all pastors, bishops serve the holiness Christ shares with the Church. The visibility of bishops to the Church and the world gives their witness particular prominence within the Church’s total witness. The words and lives of those who lead the church can have a profound effect. Our churches need to seek leaders who will reflect Christ in their total life and ministry.”

#### Episcopal Church, “Called to Communion Mission” (*excerpts*)<sup>10</sup>

- “Anglicans and Lutherans believe that the church is not the creation of individual believers, but that it is constituted and sustained by the Triune God through God’s saving action in Word and Sacraments. We believe that the church is sent into the

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rying on the business of the corporation. Submit a report to each regular convention of the synod concerning its life and work, together with such observations and recommendations affecting the synod as may be considered important.

<sup>9</sup> *Episcopacy: A Lutheran-United Methodist Common Statement to the Church*, Paragraphs 10,16,18,35-38.

<sup>10</sup> “Called to Common Mission, Agreement in the Doctrine of the Faith,” Paragraph 5.

world as sign, instrument, and foretaste of the kingdom of God. But we also recognize that the church stands in constant need of reform and renewal.”

- “We believe that all members of the church are called to participate in its apostolic mission. They are therefore given various ministries by the Holy Spirit. Within the community of the church the ordained ministry exists to serve the ministry of the

whole people of God. We hold the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament to be a gift of God to his church and therefore an office of divine institution.”

- “We believe that a ministry of pastoral oversight (*episkope*), exercised in personal, collegial, and communal ways, is necessary to witness to and safeguard the unity and apostolicity of the church.

## **B. Role of the Bishop in our Synod Constitution**

The bishop shall (and this is only *a summary*<sup>11</sup>):

- Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of the ELCA and have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in our Synod.

- Ordain approved candidates for minister of Word and Sacrament, and consecrate ministers of Word and Service and install rostered ministers whose calls have been attested.

- Advocate the mission and theology of the ELCA, fostering commitments to the missions of our Synod and witnessing in the region served by our Synod.

- Report to our annual Synod Assembly concerning our Synod’s life and work together.

- Counsel our Synod’s related institutions and organizations; strengthen the unity of the Church; be our chief ecumenical officer; participate regularly in the ELCA Conference of Bishops; and foster our awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion.

- Serve as the President of the Synod Corporation and as be the chief executive and administrative officer of our Synod.

- Supervise the work of the other synod officers and of all synod staff members.

- Be a member of all committees and any other organizational units of our Synod.

- Provide pastoral care and leadership for the specialized and/or extra-parish ministries of our Synod.

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<sup>11</sup> See [Appendix B](#) for the full text of the Synod Constitution.

## PART THREE – OUR SYNOD IN CHRIST’S MISSION

**Our Mission...**      **“Marked with the Cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world.”**

### Our Synod

The La Crosse Area Synod is comprised of the 38,100 baptized members, organized by the Spirit into 73 congregations, Lutheran Campus Ministry, and partnered Bible camps and nursing homes. Together, we strive to spread the Good News of the

Gospel and meet the needs of our communities. What follows is a listing and brief summary of the many and diverse activities that make up “the ministry” of our Synod.

### Our Synod-Partners in Ministry...

In a very important way, all ministry is communal! We can always accomplish more in concert with others than we can alone. One central purpose of a synod’s bishop, officers, councils and committees

is to bring together people and resources – to “broker” (if you will) the pooling of our scarce time and our many talents – to make a specific mission activity possible.

### ... with Our Congregations ...

- † **Congregational Mission Support** – The foundation of our Synod’s financial health, just as offerings are the foundation of a congregation’s financial health.
- † **The Call Process** – A vital part of a synod bishop’s duties, something our congregations depend upon. Bishops manage the process from identifying candidates to recommending them for a specific Call. Information and resources for a call process are found [HERE](#).<sup>12</sup>
- † **Workshops & Training** – Opportunities organized by our Synod staff and

committees for the benefit of congregations, such as workshops for congregational officers, projects of reflection and renewal, special training sessions for pastors to meet ELCA requirements, conferences on anti-racism, and so forth.

- † **Coulee Courier, Synod Update & Council Courier** – Three regular newsletters from the Synod Office to the people of the congregations, including messages, a listing of events and activities, links to detailed information, and summaries of Synod Council meetings; sent via e-mail. You can subscribe and view archived issues [HERE](#).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For readers of hard copies, the URLs will be listed in footnotes – <https://www.lacrosseareasynd.org/call-process>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.lacrosseareasynd.org/synod-news>

## ... within Our Own Synod ...

- † **Lutheran Campus Ministry** – Helping our college students at UW-La Crosse, Viterbo, and Western Tech navigate all the pressures of college life through opportunities for Christian fellowship, Bible Study, worship, retreats, service trips, and other activities. More information [HERE](#).<sup>14</sup>
- † **Synod School of Theology** – Offering a unique opportunity for members of our Synod to study the Bible, Theology and Church History, to grow in faith and deepen discipleship. More information is available [HERE](#).<sup>15</sup>
- † **Women of the ELCA** – Supporting and coordinating the WELCA groups in the congregations. See the latest issue of the WELCA *Newsletter* [HERE](#).<sup>16</sup>
- † **Church in Society Committee** – Offering opportunities for education and advocacy on the significant issues of our times, guided by the official social statements of the ELCA; working with larger church organizations, such as LSS.
- † **Synod Hunger Sub-Committee** – Focusing our concern for the hungry in our own neighborhoods and around the world through education, advocacy and fund-raising projects, confronting the causes of hunger wherever they exist.
- † **Middle East Subcommittee** – Focusing concerns for peace and social justice for all people in the Middle East.
- † **Lutheran Youth Leading Evangelism (LYLE)** – Fostering the faith of our youth through leadership training, connections with youth ministries and special projects. See more [HERE](#).<sup>17</sup>
- † **Mission Support Committee** – Encouraging financial support for the ministries of our Synod through education and advocacy.
- † **Evangelism and Outreach Committee** – Witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through projects of outreach to new people and evangelism through existing congregations.
- † **Professional Service and Care Committee** – Serving the needs of our rostered leaders through programs for clergy wellness and self-care; reviewing and recommending salary guidelines; assisting in pastor continuing education; organizing the Spring Theological Conference.
- † **Candidacy Committee** – Assisting men and women from our Synod who are preparing for professional service in the church, mentoring and monitoring their progress toward ordination.
- † **Global Mission Committee** – Connecting people within our Synod to the needs of the world through programs and advocacy; spreading news of Lutheran immigration services and global mission events; also, overseeing our relations with our Companion Synods (see below). More information is [HERE](#).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.laxcg.org/>

<sup>15</sup> [www.lacrosseareasynod.org/synod-school-of-theology](http://www.lacrosseareasynod.org/synod-school-of-theology)

<sup>16</sup> <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rzsvjFrHHzPGHX4x4g6ste11HdEsQyHQ/view>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lacrosseareasynod.org/youth-leading-evangelism>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.lacrosseareasynod.org/outreach>

### ... with Other Synods ...

- † **ELCA Region 5** – A gathering of the 12 ELCA synods of Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa, dealing with clergy mobility between synods and other matters of common concern.
- † **Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin** – Advocating on issues of hunger and poverty, as guided by ELCA Social Statements. More information is available [HERE](#).<sup>19</sup>
- † **Wisconsin Council of Churches** – Advocating on common concerns of faith and justice. More information is available [HERE](#).<sup>20</sup>
- † **Lutheran Social Services** – Meeting important social welfare needs in Wisconsin communities. More information is available [HERE](#).<sup>21</sup>

### ... with Other Lutheran Missions ...

- † **Luther Park & Sugar Creek Bible Camps** – Providing faith-building experiences for people of all ages in the Lutheran youth camp tradition. More information: [Luther Park](#)<sup>22</sup> and [Sugar Creek Bible Camp](#).<sup>23</sup>
- † **ELCA Seminaries** – Educating and Training the next generation of ELCA clergy. Our Synod is partnered with the [Lutheran School of Theology Chicago](#)<sup>24</sup> (LSTC) and [Wartburg Seminary](#).<sup>25</sup>
- † **ELCA Colleges** – See [HERE](#)<sup>26</sup> for details.

### ... with Churchwide ...

- † **ELCA Churchwide Mission Support** – We sent 46 percent of our Synod’s mission support from our congregations on to the ELCA in support of Churchwide ministries. Much more information about the mission activities of Churchwide is available [HERE](#).<sup>27</sup>
- † **ELCA Chaplaincies**
- † **Mission Investment Fund** – Providing low-interest funding source for congregational building projects, and also investment opportunities for individuals and congregations. More [HERE](#).<sup>28</sup>

### ... with the World ...

- † **Our Companion Synods** – Accompanying our brothers and sisters in Christ along the journey of faith in partnership with other synods of the Lutheran Church. Our Synod has a special relationship with three particular synods, regularly sending delegations to worship with them, learning from and

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.loppw.org/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.wichurches.org/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.lsswis.org/LSS.htm>

<sup>22</sup> <http://lutherpark.org/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://wp.sugarcreekbiblecamp.org/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.lstc.edu>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.wartburgseminary.edu/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Leadership/Colleges-and-Universities>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Stewardship/Mission-Support>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.mif.elca.org/>

praying with our brothers and sisters in Christ:

- Southeast Synod of the ELCA – More information [HERE](#).<sup>29</sup>

- Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren (ECCB) – More information [HERE](#).<sup>30</sup>
- Iglesia Luterana del Perú (IL-P) – More information [HERE](#).<sup>31</sup>

## PART FOUR – ELECTING A BISHOP

### Who is Eligible to be Elected?

The *Constitution of the La Crosse Area Synod* requires that our synod bishop be an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in good standing in the ELCA. There are no other requirements. Therefore, we will Call our next bishop from a vast pool of ELCA ordained ministers with diverse gifts and experience.

Of course, any strong candidate for bishop must have a deep faith and abiding commitment to Lord Jesus, and also broad skills in pastoral care, preaching, administrative leadership, and the ability to lift up a vision for this church and its ministry.

Pastors serve in all the diverse ministry fields throughout the ELCA – not just congregations, but also in social service agencies, educational institutions, and synodical and churchwide staff. All will have gifts and skills that may commend them for consideration. The task of electing a bishop is best served with a careful discernment of the many pastors of this church who bring a variety of skills and experiences, each of whom could serve successfully as bishop.

***It is very important to remember: Our conversation needs to be about the needs of this church – not just about the gifts of the candidates.***<sup>32</sup>

### How Will the Election Process Work?

#### **Step One – Surveying the Synod**

After you are done studying this Guide – either in group discussions or on your own – please take the 2020 Synod Survey. You can complete the Survey in one of two ways: First, you can use the Survey Form at the end of this packet – please, print it out, fill it in and mail it to: La Crosse Area

Synod, 2301 South Avenue, La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601-6229. Alternatively, you can complete the Synod Survey on-line by clicking [HERE](#), or using the link on the Synod Web Site. The results of the Survey will be summarized and published on the Synod Web Site in mid-February.

**Please complete the survey by  
Wednesday, January 15, 2020.**

<sup>29</sup> [www.elca-ses.org](http://www.elca-ses.org)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.lacrosseareasynd.org/companion-synod-czech-republic>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.lacrosseareasynd.org/companion-synod---peru>

<sup>32</sup> From: *Choosing a Bishop*, by the Rev. Jan Erickson-Pearson, for the Commission for Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, revised March 2006.

## **Step Two – Nominating Candidates**

From our Synod Constitution:

“S9.04. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by the following election process.

“a. Each conference in this synod shall hold a nominating caucus and shall be permitted to nominate up to three persons for bishop...”

These **Conference Nominating Caucuses** for the 2020 Bishop Election are scheduled as follows:

**Sunday, March 15, 2020 – 3:00PM**

|              |                                      |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>South</b> | <b>Middle Coon Valley, Chaseburg</b> |
| <b>North</b> | <b>Living Hope, Ettrick</b>          |
| <b>East</b>  | <b>Trinity, Sparta</b>               |
| <b>West</b>  | <b>Bethel, La Crosse</b>             |

In these conference caucuses, Voting Members of the 2020 Synod Assembly will nominate pastors (who have agreed) for candidacy. Then, they will vote by ballot until no more than three nominees qualify as candidates.

## **Step Three – Information and Discernment**

From our Synod Constitution, again:

“[S9.04] b. Information of the nominated candidates and sufficient candidate forums to inform the persons of each conference shall be planned and carried out by the Synod Council.”

After the Nominating Caucuses, biographical information about the candidates will be made available through the Synod Web Site. More importantly, the nominated candidates will be invited to participate in a series of **Candidate Forums**, scheduled as follows:

### **Candidate Forum Schedule**

**Saturday, April 25, 2020 – 3:00PM**  
**South Conference**  
**Middle Coon Valley, Chaseburg**

**Sunday, April 26, 2020 – 2:00PM**  
**East Conference**  
**Trinity, Sparta**

**Sunday, April 26, 2020 – 7:00PM**  
**West Conference**  
**First, Onalaska**

**Monday, April 27, 2020 – 6:00PM**  
**North Conference**  
**Mount Calvary, Trempealeau**

Each candidate will respond in a random order to a set of questions. These questions will be taken from questions submitted to the Synod Office by mail, e-mail or on-line.

## **Step Four – Balloting at the Synod Assembly**

All candidates arising from the Nominating Caucuses will appear on the first ballot at the 2020 Synod Assembly. Once more, from the Synod Constitution:

“[S9.04.] c. A five ballot election process shall be used at the Synod Assembly, as follows:

- Ballot One – 75% required for election with top 6 advancing to the next ballot.
- Ballot Two – 75% required for election with top 4 advancing to the next ballot.
- Ballot Three – 66% required for election with top 3 advancing to the next ballot.
- Ballot Four – 66% required for election with top 2 advancing to the next ballot.
- Ballot Five – Majority required for election.

“d. Provision shall be made on the Synod Assembly program for at least the six top vote receivers to address the Assembly during the election process.

“e. In case of a tie for the last place to advance to the next ballot, all of those tied shall advance to the next ballot.”

The balloting and the candidates’ presentations will be scheduled as the 2020 Assembly arrangements develop.