

Biographical Information - Rev. Elizabeth "Libby" Howe

1. **Name:** Rev. Elizabeth "Libby" A. Howe (she/her)
2. **Current Position:** Assistant to the Bishop/Director for Evangelical Mission, La Crosse Area Synod, ELCA (2009-present)
3. **Congregation Membership:** First Lutheran, Onalaska, WI
4. **Date/Year of Birth:** July 5, 1975
5. **Date/Year of Ordination:** July 14, 2002
6. **Previous Positions:**
 - a. Pastor, De Soto (WI) and Freeman (Ferryville, WI) Lutheran Churches (2002-2009)
 - b. Intern/Transformational Leadership Resident, Christ Lutheran (East Northport, NY) (1999-2001)
 - c. Day Camp Counselor/Program Coordinator, Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Ohio (Summers, 1995 & 1996)
7. **Education and Earned Degrees** (with institutions and years, most recent first):
Non-degree/certificate education with significant (40+) contact hours:
2019 Clergy Clinic in Emotional Family Process, Lombard Mennonite Peace Institute
2018 Mediation Skills Training, Lombard Mennonite Peace Institute
2017 Policy Institute, Wisconsin Women's Network
2016 Spiritual Direction Training, Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse
2015 Community Organizing Training, Gamaliel/ELCA Collaboration
2012 Emotional Intelligence-Group Development Training
2010 Emotional Intelligence-Human Relations Training

Earned degrees:
2002 Master of Divinity, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH
1997 Bachelor of Arts, The College of Wooster, Wooster, OH
8. **Please list up to five (5) current or past synodical or Churchwide activities that would inform your service as Bishop of the La Crosse Area Synod.**
 - a. Faithful Innovations collaboration of 6 WI Synods & Luther Seminary (2018-present)
 - b. Directors for Evangelical Mission Development Team (2017-present)
 - c. Lutheran Campus Ministry of La Crosse Board (2007-present)
 - d. Dean, Region 5 Directors for Evangelical Mission (2018-2020)
 - e. ELCA Macedonia Project & Mission Support Team (2013-2017)
9. **List of up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as Bishop of this Synod.**
 - a. Our Wisconsin Revolution Housing Working Group (2020-present)
 - b. La Crosse Election Inspector (2020-present)
 - c. Read2Success United Way volunteer (2018-present)

- d. Human Rights Campaign Equality Action volunteer (2018)
- e. Holy Trinity-Longfellow Neighborhood Association founder/officer (2014-2016)

10. What gifts would you bring to the office of Bishop of this Synod (200 words maximum)?

I have lived and worked in the La Crosse Area Synod for 19 years and have only grown in my love for its congregations, ministries, and people. In the past 12 years I have gained knowledge of the unique stories of nearly every congregation in the synod by working through pastoral transitions, times of turmoil, and moments of celebration. Building on that knowledge, I bring hope and excitement for the future and see the potential our synod has to grow in our witness for the justice centered, transformational love of Jesus. I also bring my past, my woundedness, and weaknesses. I bring the experience of being an LGBTQIA+ person and the unique realities of managing mental illness. Through all these things God has called me to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and lead God's people. I do all of that with everything I am, hoping that others might do the same without fear of rejection or stigmatization. Most importantly, I bring a conviction that everyone matters; God is FOR us and for the whole cosmos and will give us what we need to face whatever lies ahead.

11. What do you see as the principal challenge this Synod will face in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it (200 words maximum)?

The principal challenge we have as a synod is the same, but as part of a more complex system, as the challenge for every congregation: To learn to live and serve from the point of vulnerability and margin rather than one of strength and center. We are in a long period of deconstruction as an institution, and we experience this in ever present questions of viability and sustainability, often expressed as a fight for survival. It is a messy and uncertain and anxious existence. I will not be able to fix this challenge or guarantee anyone's survival. But I will prioritize tending to both ordained and lay leaders, so that they have the community, support, strength, and resilience to lead during this time. I will also prioritize the ongoing communal discernment process that prayerfully asks, "What is God doing? What are we learning? To where is Jesus calling us to follow him right now?" I will expect the Spirit to break us open, hear and see people we have not noticed, repent of our blinding and binding privilege, imagine new possibilities, try new things, and see life emerge from death, just as God always promises it will.

12. Describe your leadership style (200 words maximum).

Because every moment we are together is a God-given opportunity to deepen discipleship, I lead with prayer, relationship building activities and opportunities to learn. I strive to listen well and be attentive to all the voices at the table, as well as those that are missing. I can be both diplomatic and directive, depending on the circumstances. I do not shy away from conflict or hard conversations. I value competence and strive to do things well. I work towards integrity within the organization, meaning all the parts operate from the same purpose and work toward the same goals. I generally trust others, prize honesty and growth, and seek the expertise of those more knowledgeable than I. I often stress that our process is as important as end results. People experience my leadership as energetic and encouraging and have described me as courageous, curious, and compassionate.

13. What is the last book you read that had special significance for you?

All About Love: New Visions by bell hooks

14. What is your favorite movie and why?

Fried Green Tomatoes because it beautifully illustrates the depth and power of loving friendship among women.

15. What are your hobbies/interests?

Connecting with friends, spending time with my father, sister, niece, and nephews, reading, writing, hiking, walking with dogs, following college football and women's professional soccer, traveling, and finding new quiet places replete with trees and water.

16. What else would you like to share with us (100 words maximum)?

I am an unapologetic activist for just policies that seek to break cycles of poverty and historical disenfranchisement. Whatever dissatisfaction I have about the way things are I hear as a summons to learn and help create a world where all people know their inherent worth and are free to become the precious humans God created them to be. I am learning how to be an advocate in the way of Jesus, from the ground of Love. When I speak out, I also try to provide ways for people to change and do better rather than demonizing them.