



**Minneapolis Area Synod**  
of the ELCA

# Listening Session Conversation Guide<sup>1</sup>

## Opening Prayer

*“And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless.” - Philippians 1:9-10*

Good and gracious God, we give you thanks for this day and this opportunity to gather as both servants and leaders of your church. Today we commit ourselves to a process of deep discernment as we consider the role of a Bishop and our deepest longings for the future of our Church. You know where we all are in our journeys of faith. You know the obstacles and joys we have faced. You also know the possibilities and challenges our Synod faces in the coming years. Guide our conversations, thoughts, and prayers this day. Help us find agreements and help us to disagree respectfully and with a curiosity to understand differing views. Let your will be done in our discernment. Come, Holy Spirit, Come. Amen.

## **Lectio Divina: 1 Corinthians 12:13-14, 27-28** (Read twice)

*For in the one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

*Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many.*

*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.*

- **First reading:**
  - Listen for a word or short phrase that stands out to you.
- **Second reading:**
  - Listen for how God might be speaking to the community/communities of which you are a part.

## **Reflection:**

- *What caught your imagination?*
- *What were the words or phrases in the text that jumped out at you?*
- *What might the Spirit be revealing to you in the text as we think about electing our next Bishop for the Minneapolis Area Synod?*

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from 2024 Toolkit for synod Bishop Elections, “Exhibit D: A Conversation Regarding the Election of a Synod Bishop” and “Discernment & Conversation Guide for Pre-Identification of Bishop Candidates.”

## **Part 1: Our Synod**

**Mission:** *The Minneapolis Area Synod works together so that all experience gracious invitation into life-giving Christian community and live in just and healthy neighborhoods.*

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are you celebrating in your congregation?
2. What are some of the challenges you are facing in your congregation?
3. How can your congregation and the synod better collaborate for the sake of Christ's mission?
4. What should be the primary priorities for us as a synod in the next six years?
5. What should congregations in the synod expect of the synod's bishop in the next six years?
6. Considering the synod mission statement, what has the synod done well and what has it done not so well in the last six years?

## **Part 2: Gifts, Traits, Characteristics of our next Bishop**

1. In divided groups read together the General Responsibilities of the Bishop document available at each of your tables.
2. Were there any responsibilities listed that surprised you?
3. Which items on the list of General Responsibilities would you want the bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod to consider the highest priority? Why?
4. Considering the discussion and our time spent in Scripture, from this list of characteristics below—all of which are important, which should receive priority? Pick three.
5. Think on the responsibilities that were of the highest priority for you and your group as you choose these 3 items. If you can think of any gifts that are not included on this list, please share them.
6. *Group Discussion:* Share your top characteristics with each other and discuss why you chose them. Were any characteristics chosen more often among your group? Why do you think that is?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has a deep faith</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loves the Church</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is trustworthy, courageous, honest, and acts with integrity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lives out radical grace</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has been an effective congregational leader</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has a pastoral presence</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is theologically grounded</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is focused on God's mission for God's church</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advocates for those who are impoverished and on the margins</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Possesses emotional maturity and compassion while able to navigate criticism</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is a team builder and stewards human resources well</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Models patience and resilience</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Practices deep listening</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Models and supports out of the box thinking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is a lifelong learner and teacher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is flexible and receptive to change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is able to discern priorities and act accordingly</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Knows how to create systems for change and has ability to delegate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Versed in conflict management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has shown aptitude for problem solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has strong intercultural competency and experience and sensitivity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Possesses administrative skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has sound and healthy home life and relationships; can balance work and personal life</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Brings wisdom, insights, and understands the complexity of the church</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't let ego get in the way of the calling</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has strong verbal and written communication skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Understands parliamentary procedure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is skilled at running efficient meetings</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is technologically skilled</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Understands the struggles of small and rural congregations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Supports the redevelopment of congregations and new starts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledges and understands the issues facing the Church and synod</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strategic planner and thinker</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has strong sense of justice, and rooted in ethical decision making</li> </ul>
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**Top Characteristics:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Closing Prayer**

## Bishop Election Committee

The Synod constitution provides for a Bishop Election Committee (BEC) to oversee the nomination and election process, working in cooperation with the Vice President of the Synod and the Assembly Operations and Election Committees. The committee is impartial and guided by the constitution to prepare congregations and voting members to be informed participants in the election. Its members were nominated by the Synod Nominating Committee and elected by the Synod Council on June 15, 2023.

## Bishop Election Process



Information will be sent to voting members of Conference Assemblies in late January and to voting members of the Synod Assembly in early April. All materials will also be posted on the Synod website.

Another resource is the Synod constitution and bylaws available on the BEC page. Constitution Section S9.04 and Bylaws S9.04.01-.03 specify the nomination and election procedure. Sections S8.10 - S8.15 outline the qualification, responsibilities, and term of Office of the Bishop. Sections S7.01 – S7.32 relate to the Synod Assembly. The Bishop will be elected at the Synod Assembly, which is set for **May 2-4, 2024**, at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Ramsey.

**Visit the 2024 Minneapolis Area Synod Bishop Election Page:**

