

# Joy McDonald Coltvet

## (She/her)



**Current Position: Lead Pastor,  
Christ on Capitol Hill, St. Paul**

**Date and Year of Ordination:** August 25, 2001

### **Previous Calls and Positions:**

- Interim Lead Pastor Lutheran Church of Peace 2013-2014
- Transition (Interim) Pastor St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church 2012-2013
- Director of Admissions Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago 2006-2011
- Campus Pastor Lutheran Campus Ministry in Greater Milwaukee 2005-2006
- Associate Pastor Galilee Lutheran Church 2001-2005
- Registrar; Summer Music Coordinator Holden Village 1999-2000
- Intern Pastor St. John's and St. Paul's Lutheran Churches 1998-1999

### **Education and Earned Degrees:**

- Doctor of Ministry Catholic Theological Union 2012
- Master of Divinity Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago 2001
- Bachelor of Arts Luther College 1996

### **Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as our next bishop:**

I continue to seek God's guidance as I sense an inner call to encourage, empower and strengthen church leaders. I am interested in this role that would allow me to engage with the challenges and opportunities facing the Church, Synod and community. I am in meaningful cohorts in the Minneapolis Area Synod where I have continued to grow with colleagues in resiliency, leadership, embodied anti-racism and more. My life experiences in diverse settings reinforce a strong sense of justice and ethics that I would bring. I love creative problem-solving and think we can become more collaborative in loving resistance to a competitive culture. Openness, curiosity, respect and empathy are some of my strengths in the area of intercultural competence. With self-awareness, compassion, and a down-to-earth approach, I would offer spiritual and relational support as we change what needs to change. If called to the bishop's office—a complicated & collaborative calling—I would not be alone.

## **What is your vision for the Minneapolis Area Synod?**

I see so many strengths—gifted congregations, organizations, rostered leaders and vital worshipers in this Synod. I believe that our connections are a gift. I often advocate that it is important to lean into and build strong, authentic, honest relationships in challenging times. We can name that “we’re not what we used to be,” and know that God’s Spirit continues to move within and among us. I advocate that we cultivate courage. I hope there is a new openness within this Synod to the transformative changes that are unfolding and making us new. Our past can be a “nurse log,” to nourish what is springing up. In this living system, tending what is dying with honor and dignity while thoughtfully and prayerfully moving resources toward what is emerging is a central task. To discern the path together, I would ask that we learn embodied practices to grow our capacity to interrupt evil, nurture beloved community and stand against any form of domination-oriented Christianity.

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## **What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities to this synod in the next six years, and how would you approach them?**

Loneliness and despair are widespread within our world, country, city, church. Our congregations have resources to draw on and share to offer hope, love and connection.

In a world that wants us to work like machines and believe that work is never done, I believe that we’re being called to pause, breathe, rest, wonder.

Even in the church, we have tended to see ourselves in competition. In a Synod that has great economic disparities from congregation to congregation, area to area, I will keep asking how we can leverage and connect resources for the good of all.

Some of us are willing to talk and act politically. A challenge is how the rest can overcome barriers to speaking or acting publicly. I work to empower others to grow in courage to speak and act boldly in harmony with God’s love for the whole world, and not leave the burden of justice work on the shoulders of the most vulnerable.

There is plenty of money to fund dynamic work in this Synod, share with neighbors who live in poverty, as well as fund creative, meaningful ministries throughout this Synod. However, there have been patterns of withholding from our shared work as a larger church because our loyalties are pulled in many directions. I will encourage bringing our resources together for powerfully good work. We can counteract myths of scarcity by investing in life together. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

This Synod is a living system. Dying and emerging are natural and can be scary. As a neighbor, witnessing what is happening, I will listen, respond honestly, and invite the people of the Minneapolis Area Synod to join with me in working through new realities with hopeful vision.

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## **What has prepared you to be effective in creating belonging among various cultural groups?**

Beginning in childhood through today, I have a strong desire to connect across difference and help create the kind of beloved community imagined and not yet fully realized. As a teenager and young adult, my communities deepened my commitments to inclusivity both from the ways they welcomed and the ways they did not. As a student, I worked as a farm worker, health care assistant, writing tutor and international student assistant. As a pastor, I continue learn together with BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and global leaders and dive deeply into questions of belonging and solidarity within diverse community. I'm committed to ongoing development. I'm so grateful for partnerships with global leaders and interfaith teachers in so many contexts. The congregation where I am pastor has a story of creating belonging with new immigrants and refugees for nearly 50 years. This is just a taste of the life experiences that have cultivated a spirit of listening deeply, humility, truth-telling, and open-heartedness.

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**Describe up to five recent or past synod, churchwide activities or community-related activities that have significantly impacted you. How do these experiences inform your vision for serving as our next bishop?**

Five recent activities that have significantly impacted me are participating in:

- Embodied Anti-Racism Cohort, facilitated by the Center for Leadership and Neighborhood Engagement, drawing on the teaching of Resmaa Menakem
- Congregational Vitality Event in Saint Paul, Tools for the Church: Funerals and Midwives—a day of gathering images for how we can honor deeply those parts of our life together that are passing away while generously moving resources toward what is emerging
- Riverside Innovation Hub—congregation training for public leadership in the neighborhood through Augsburg/Minneapolis Area Synod
- Capitol Mall Design Charrette—a weeklong intensive process for imagining together with diverse partners how to redesign the Minnesota State Capitol Area and prioritize resources to bring a more life-giving experience for those who live near and visit the Capitol
- White Lutherans for Racial Justice Triennial Assembly—I was among the 57 participants who gathered from throughout the U.S. to imagine together ways for more white Lutherans to invest time and money to show our support for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (or the Global Majority) within our denomination and communities

These activities have helped me have a community of accountability so that I can participate more fully in God's activity of creating beloved community. I am continually learning practices for better leadership and better encounters with diverse neighbors. The charrette was an incredible example of creative problem-solving and prioritization of resources with neighbors from so many parts of the state and areas of expertise. I left the Triennial Assembly with renewed energy to inspire in particular the more than 90% white Lutherans to invest time and money to show a witness that white Lutherans stand together with the less than 10% BIPOC membership of our church in love and justice.

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## **In what ways have you applied new learnings to your current context?**

In 10 years at Christ on Capitol Hill, we have had to constantly learn, adapt and pivot (like so many of you in your ministry contexts). We celebrated a milestone anniversary (150 years) acknowledging a truly diverse and adaptive history. We began and completed a Capital Campaign to renovate our kitchen so that kitchen tenants could utilize the space to feed people, even in a pandemic. In the pandemic, we faced fears and adapted our technology and practices to serve more widely. In the time of uprising, we learned the significance of our presence outside our building and in active partnership with others. Since then, we have been reaching out in more deliberate ways to our neighbors to listen to and learn from one another. Along the way, we also became Reconciling in Christ, received historical designation and grant-funding, and began land acknowledgement. We have welcomed the gifts of seminarians/pastors from many regions and nations.

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## **What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts have you used in developing lay and clergy leaders that you would bring as bishop of this synod?**

As I work with others, I am strategic and adaptable. When one option doesn't work, I'm able to move to other options that might work better. The opportunity to create—arts, music, communications, movement, worship, welcoming space, community—brings so much joy. I delight in the gifts of others and others pick up on the ways that I make space for them to take responsibility, lead, grow and shine. For years, I have known that it is essential for a bishop to be willing to navigate conflict, and I continue to practice a variety of strategies for navigating tough conversations with courage, grace and resiliency. I show appreciation to others on the team, and I am grateful for the opportunity to give and receive mentoring. I am diligent in carrying out my responsibilities and take time to build relationships. I cultivate and thrive in a trust-based environment where we set healthy limits, take time for our other vocations, and support one another. I encourage others in holistic practices.

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