

Megan Torgerson

(She/her)



**Current Position: Lead Pastor,
Easter Lutheran Church, Eagan**

Date and Year of Ordination: September 20, 2008

Previous Calls and Positions:

- Easter - July 2020 - present
- Augustana Lutheran Church, West St Paul MN - Sept 2008 - June 2020
- Community Lutheran Church, Las Vegas NV - Aug 2004 - Aug 2005

Education and Earned Degrees:

- Master of Divinity - Luther Seminary, 2006
- Bachelor of Arts, Religion and English Writing majors - Concordia College, Moorhead MN, 2002

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

I believe firmly in the external call of the church and the work of communal discernment. When someone invites you to consider a position that serves God and neighbor while being your full self, you pay attention. Therefore, when I was invited to consider being nominated for bishop, I knew it deserved my consideration. However, I also know we must each examine our sense of internal call while evaluating our own motivations. I want to serve the wider church in whatever way I can and find joy and energy in bringing people together. That could be as a bishop, but it could also be in many other ministries – including my current context. I welcome the work if the Spirit so leads the synod. I do not wish to pursue this call as if it is a goal in itself. Therefore, I look forward to being transparent and honest in this process without interference from pride or ego.

What is your vision for the Minneapolis Area Synod?

I do not have a vision for the synod; rather, together we discern God's vision for our shared ministry. I also contend that an organization's direction is not based solely on the new head of staff. The new leader – in this case, the bishop – should not completely re-envision the work of the synod based on her own preferences, nor should she abandon the precedent and character of the work already done unless crisis or conflict demand it.

If you want to hear more about who I am as a leader, you can find those answers in the rest of these questions. The vital work of the wider church that we do together remains clear. We must continue to tend faithfully to denominational work like sustaining, renewing, and creating congregations; supporting the ministry of leaders, whether rostered or lay; nurturing partnerships across the church and world; and working to serve the gospel by faithfully loving God and neighbor in word and action.

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

One great opportunity for the MAS comes from its beautiful cultural diversity. Its width and breadth proves what our siblings in Christ around the globe already know but what this country can't quite get right: that the Lutheran tradition isn't limited to one race or expression. I hope the synod can continue to nurture these relationships, build opportunities to help congregations throughout the synod learn from each other, and bear witness to the vitality of the Lutheran church on a much wider scale than just within our synod or denomination.

The MAS also has churches and leaders doing incredible kinds of learning, community, and support that don't fit the traditional model of a congregation. This must be taken more seriously and should be seen as strength. It is possible for the church to be both embodied and digital, contextual and connected, onsite and online. The Spirit has always led us into places where we weren't quite ready to go, and we have examples of this already at work in this synod.

The primary challenge is not unique to this synod. Rapid change in all areas of modern life has led to distrust of institutions and lack of engagement in church life. We tend to respond by clinging to models of faith and life that served us in the past but are at best restrictive and at worst prohibitive to what God calls us to next. It is possible for us to both respect and honor the way we have done church while asking tough questions about what it means to be church now. We are no longer in a time of technical change. It is time for adaptive change that transforms us into something more just, agile, and compassionate.

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

My own rootedness in community gives me perspective for building and nurturing belonging on a wider scale. I was baptized, got my first Bible, received my first communion, affirmed my faith, got married, and was ordained all in the same sanctuary in the same church where my grandparents worshiped. Everyone should have that same sense of belonging, safety, understanding, and relationship. It will certainly look different than what I grew up with in my rural Minnesotan farming community. It should be authentic to each community and group. The Minneapolis Area Synod joyfully contains a wide variety of cultural groups. First, we must ensure each community is supported in their particular expression. But next, we must make sure that we are all able to see each other as part of a wider whole. When we are centered in community, we are more grounded and able to see others as our community, too.

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?

I have been a part of the recent cohort of the Center for Clergy Renewal at Holy Wisdom Monastery near Madison, WI. Its focus on contemplative practice, spirituality, and overall clergy health has made me a better person and pastor. It reminds me that a bishop is a spiritual leader, one who must literally practice what she preaches, committed to the transformative work of communion with God, and empowering others to experience the same.

I am also part of the Iron Sharpening Iron program of Princeton Theological Seminary. It offered a variety of trainings, classes, and sessions for female and non-binary pastors of numerous denominations and cultural traditions across the country. The courses have been practical and ministry-centered, covering everything from budgets to design thinking to handling conflict from a neuroscience perspective. It has affirmed and strengthened my leadership skills, given me deeper connections to a variety of pastors from around the nation, and reminded me of the value of life-long learning, especially for our rostered leaders and church staff.

I previously served as member of the St. Paul Area Synod Council and interim conference dean. While I have served before in other positions, like Churchwide Voting Member or Churchwide Disciplinary Committee, this was my most intensive, in-depth role in serving the church on a wider level. I found deep appreciation for the work of synod staff, the variety of synodical leadership, and the desire to continue serving the gospel in new and broad ways.

Finally, the internet will reveal that I was Miss Minnesota 2003 and remain involved in the organization to this day. Twenty years ago, the organization made me the pastor I am today by giving me confidence, strengthening my public speaking skills, and connecting me to the power of women leaders and devoted volunteers. It reminds me that a strength of an organization is always its people; we know God is good because we know each other.

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

My current context is all new learning. I started in the summer of 2020, where I quickly learned about leading as a non-anxious, compassionate presence and the power of digital connection in creating and sustaining community. Not long into my ministry, I led the congregation through the complexities of a dual call process. I learned about clarifying God's vision among us, the joy and challenge of mutual discernment for the future of the church, and how to help a congregation navigate a nation-wide call process. Currently, our congregation is working to address decades-old facilities needs. This has meant extensive and in-depth work with congregational committees and certified professionals. I've learned how to recruit and delegate to talented experts, translate goals into action, fearlessly talk about money, and continue to guide an organization through change. I welcome change, not for its own sake, but so systems and individuals can flourish for all the right reasons.

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?

I am collaborative. I ask questions, listen, and guide discernment rather than dictate direction. I enjoy the way this brings out the fullness of gifts in people, not just as individuals, but as a faithful whole.

I am an enthusiast. I get excited about new opportunities, love cheering others on, find joy in supporting others in their work, and relish celebrating our successes. I am a lovemonger who always defaults to expressions of compassion and mutual care. This has proved meaningful as I teach and preach, but also in nurturing relationships, facing conflict, and empowering leaders.

I am a communicator. I am comfortable with the written and spoken word and representing a wider organization. I find that this helps keep people connected and informed, which alleviates anxiety and confusion. It helps people know that they are heard so they stay engaged. It shows others that they are also capable of serving, speaking, and showing up for the good of the church and their community.
