

From the Bishop Election Committee

Ten Questions and Answers about the 2018 Election of a Bishop

Minneapolis Area Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The election of the bishop is a spiritual process in which both the candidates and voting members seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand the needs of the synod and discern who God is calling to leadership. Please pray for the synod as we prepare to take this important action.

1. Who can serve as the bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod?

Candidates for bishop must be ordained pastors in the ELCA, though they need not be serving in the Minneapolis Area Synod. The term of office is six years, with a two-term limit. In accordance with the Minneapolis Area Synod constitution (S9.12.), nominees for bishop are required to sign a disclosure form authorizing a background check that will be conducted prior to the Synod Assembly.

2. Is there a job description for the Office of Bishop?

Chapter 8 of the [Minneapolis Area Synod constitution](#) outlines the qualifications, responsibilities, and term of office for the bishop, who is both pastor of the synod and its chief administrator.

3. Who elects the bishop?

The bishop will be elected by voting members of the Synod Assembly—lay members elected by the congregations of this synod together with all ordained pastors and deacons under call on the rosters of this synod, retired pastors elected in caucus to represent the retired pastors on the roster of this synod, the officers of the synod, and duly elected members of the Synod Council.

4. When will the next bishop of this synod be elected?

The bishop will be elected at the next Synod Assembly, which is set for May 4-5, 2018, at Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Ramsey.

5. What is the process for nominating candidates for bishop?

Candidates for bishop are nominated in two ways:

1. At **Conference Assemblies**, each conference may nominate up to three persons for bishop. Voting members at conference assemblies are rostered ministers under call; in addition, each congregation can send the same number of voting members as it sends to synod assembly. An incumbent bishop can only be considered for a second term if nominated. All conferences will meet separately, but at the same location, on Sunday, February 25, 2018, 2:00-5:00 p.m., at Westwood Lutheran Church, St. Louis Park.

Following the action of Conference Assemblies to identify nominees for bishop, Synod Vice President Craig Johnson will contact those nominated to ascertain their willingness to serve. Those who wish to keep their name in nomination must submit biographical information using the form available from the Bishop Election Committee no later than March 15, so that information can be prepared and sent to voting members prior to the Synod Assembly. Biographical information will also be posted on the synod website.

2. At the **Synod Assembly**, candidates can also be nominated. In the election for the presiding bishop and synodical bishops in the ELCA, the Nominating Ballot is typically an ecclesiastical ballot or a variation on such a ballot. On the Nominating Ballot at the Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly, all those who accepted the nomination at Conference Assemblies will be listed on the ballot. In addition, the ballot will contain a place to write in the name of a nominee.

Nominating at Conference Assemblies

If a voting member intends to nominate an ordained ELCA pastor for bishop at the Conference Assemblies, please speak with the individual in advance to verify that he or she is willing to stand for election to the office of bishop and come to the Conference Assemblies with contact information that includes the name of the congregation or institution served, email address, and phone number.

Nominating at the Synod Assembly

If a voting member decides to add a name at the Synod Assembly, some preparatory work would be helpful. It would be best to have confirmed with the individual you ask about their willingness to stand for election, as well to ask that person to complete the candidate biographical information and disclosure forms and bring them to the synod assembly. If, on the first ballot, the individual is among the top seven, the biographical information form will be copied and distributed to voting members before the second ballot. The disclosure form will permit the required background checking process to begin immediately following the Synod Assembly if the individual is elected bishop.

Advance preparation in contacting a nominee and preparation of the biographical information are in the best interest of the candidate and the assembly.

6. How is the bishop elected at the Synod Assembly?

The bishop is elected according to a procedure outlined in the Synod constitution and based on a traditional ecclesiastical ballot*:

The **Nominating Ballot** is a modified ecclesiastical ballot: all those who accepted the nomination at Conference Assemblies will be listed on the ballot, and, in addition, the ballot will contain a place for voting members to write in the name of a nominee, if they choose.

The **First Ballot** for Bishop will include the names of all those on the Nominating Ballot, with the exception of those who withdraw. Three-fourths of the votes cast will be necessary for election on this ballot.

The **Second Ballot** will be prepared with the seven candidates who received the highest number of votes—including ties—on the First Ballot. Biographical information will be made available to voting members, and each of the seven candidates (plus ties) will be invited to address the assembly for five minutes. Three-fourths or 75 percent of the legal votes is necessary for election.

The **Third Ballot** is limited to five persons—plus ties—who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes is necessary for election. Prior to the Third Ballot, the five candidates will participate in a question and answer session. Two-thirds of the legal votes cast are necessary for election.

The **Fourth Ballot** is limited to the three persons—plus ties—who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the Third Ballot, and two-thirds of the votes cast are necessary for election. Prior to the Fourth Ballot, candidates will be invited to address the assembly for five minutes.

On the **Fifth Ballot** and subsequent ballots, a majority of the legal votes cast is necessary for election. These ballots are limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot. Prior to the Fifth Ballot, additional opportunities for candidates to address the assembly may be provided at the discretion of the Bishop Election Committee in consultation with the Committee of Reference and Counsel.

*Please Note: registration will close 30 minutes prior to each ballot, and will re-open when balloting is completed.

7. Can a congregation instruct its voting members how to vote at the Synod Assembly?

Each voting member of the Synod Assembly acts on behalf of the Synod, rather than on behalf of the congregation that selected him or her to be a member of the assembly. This role of “voting member” can be contrasted with that of a “delegate” who, according to *Robert’s Rules of Order*, may be instructed by his or her constituency how to vote in regard to particular matters. There are various ways in which the voting members are representative: balance of women and men, 60 percent laity, and proportionate numbers of voting members from the smallest to largest congregations. The governing documents of the ELCA and all ELCA synods refer to members of the assembly as “voting members” rather than “delegates.” The Office of the Secretary of the ELCA explains that this term was chosen to reflect the understanding that the Synod Assembly is an assembly of the people of the church, some of whom have been duly granted voting responsibilities for governance and elections on behalf of the synod, and voting members are not politicized delegates.

8. What opportunities will be available to learn more about candidates for bishop?

Candidate forums will be held from 9:00-11:00 a.m. on April 7, at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Bloomington, and from 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. on April 14, at Faith Lutheran Church, Coon Rapids.

9. How can individuals and congregations learn more about the bishop election process?

Information will be sent to voting members of Conference Assemblies in early February 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](#). Constitution Section S9.04. and Bylaws S9.04.01. – S9.04 .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.

10. What is the role of the Bishop Election Committee?

The Synod constitution provides for a Bishop Election Committee to oversee the nomination and election process, working in cooperation with the Vice President of the Synod. The committee is impartial and is 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 20, 2017.

Members of the 2018 Bishop Election Committee are available to answer your questions and can be reached through the Minneapolis Area Synod Office, 122 West Franklin Ave., Suite 600, Minneapolis, MN 55404. The committee can also be reached by calling 612.870.3610, or by emailing them directly at MinneapolisBEC@gmail.com.

2018 Bishop Election Committee

The Rev. Bob Linstrand, chair, *Advent Lutheran Church, Anoka*
Deacon Erica Larson, *Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church, Minneapolis*
Jill Abenth, *Grace University Lutheran Church, Minneapolis*
Theartrice Williams, *Redeemer Lutheran Church, Minneapolis*
Peter Erickson, *Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Plymouth*
The Rev. Kathie Nycklemoe, *St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Bloomington*
The Rev. Mary Pechauer, *Bethlehem Lutheran Church Twin Cities*

Alternates

The Rev. Jeff Engholm, *Trinity Lutheran Church, Watertown*
Elaine Matyi, *Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Minneapolis*

Ex Officio

Craig Johnson, Synod Vice President, *Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Minneapolis*

Advisor

Beth Helgen, *Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Minneapolis*

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