

Synod Listening Sessions Summary

For the 2024 Bishop Election

During October and November of 2023, the Bishop's Election Committee conducted a series of listening sessions. The purpose of those sessions was to create opportunities for collaborative reflection on the needs of the Synod, its congregations, and our communities, as well as to enable our committee to draw insights from as many congregations as possible as we conduct our work. This was the first Bishop's election cycle in which those types of sessions were included as a part of the committee's work, and the series extended across the Synod's region, with in-person sessions held in Ham Lake, Eden Prairie, and Minneapolis, and an additional session available remotely. More than 200 leaders and members of Synod congregations participated in those sessions, and additional conversations were held with the Synod's Strategic Ministries, Interim Pastors, Synod Staff, and Synod Leaders of Color.

The committee is mindful that the views expressed during those sessions reflected a mere limited share of the perspectives and experiences present throughout the Synod. In light of the thoughtful responses and engagement offered at those sessions, however, the committee has compiled the summary below, to provide a window into the types of themes that recurred during those gatherings. That summary includes representative lists of suggested priorities for the Synod during the tenure of the next Bishop, as well as common suggestions for which characteristics will be among the most critical for the individual elected to serve in that role.

Ten Post-Election Priorities for the Synod

- Courageous and Mission-Centered Leadership
- Renewed and Sustained Engagement with Congregations throughout the Synod
- Effective Support and Partnership with Diverse and Emerging Congregations and Leaders
- Robust Recruiting, Mentoring, and Support for Synod Pastors
- Facilitating Relationship-Building and Idea-Sharing Between Church Communities
- Establishing a Culture of Innovation in Responding to Evolving Challenges and Opportunities
- Developing an Efficient, Effective, and Mission-Aligned Team of Synod Staff
- Engaging Publicly in a Manner Firmly Rooted in both Justice and the Collective Will of the Synod's Congregations
- Attention to the Varying Challenges for Churches of Different Sizes and Resources
- Overarching Attention to the Development of Meaningful Relationships and Mutual Understanding, Both Among Churches and Affiliated Individuals, and within the Broader Communities in which We Serve

Critical Characteristics for the Next Bishop

- Strong Intercultural Competence
- Strong Sense of Justice, Rooted in Ethical Decision-Making
- Recognition of, and Engagement with, Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Church and Synod
- Modeling of, and Support for, Creative Problem-Solving
- Integrity, Humility, and Emotional Intelligence