



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Bishop Nomination Information Form
2015 Bishop Election
Southwestern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

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1. Brief biographical information including parishes served, education, conference or synod offices held, ministry you are called to at the present.

Parishes Served: Faith Lutheran in Dickinson, TX (Intern); Kinsmen Lutheran in Houston, TX; Atonement Lutheran in St. Cloud, MN; Christ the King Lutheran in New Ulm, MN; **Education:** I grew up on a dairy farm, attended Belgrade High School, St. Olaf College and Luther Northwestern Seminary. My continuing education includes serving in camping ministries, multiple-staff and solo congregations. **Conference or Synod Offices Held:** In the past, our synod's Board for Congregational Life, Lutheran Campus Ministry of Minnesota State Board, Synodical Mission Statement Writing Team and ELCA Churchwide task forces (St. Louis Youth Gathering Design Team, Discipleship Task Force and Evangelism Task Force). As I serve as bishop this includes serving on the Synod Council, Long- Range Planning Committee, other committees and task forces as part of this call. I also serve on behalf of the synod on the Board of Trustees for Gustavus Adolphus College, ELCA Conference of Bishops (currently on the Executive Committee of the Conference of Bishops (COB) and Chair of the Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee). I serve on behalf of our region in the assignment process and Board of Directors for Luther Seminary. **Present Ministry:** I serve as bishop of the Southwestern Minnesota Synod.

2. How would you describe your leadership style?

I am a Christ follower first. That informs my leadership as I work to build up God's Church. I am a preacher, teacher, catalyst, writer, equipper, experimenter and connector to institutions and churchwide expression. I am never done learning about being a faithful and fruitful public steward of the Gospel we know in and through Jesus, particularly in his suffering and death on the cross and resurrection. In this multi-layered calling to serve as bishop I seek to grow deeper in faith, encourage others to grow deeper in Christ and proclaim the Gospel in what I do and say. I seek to be a wise steward of all the gifts, experiences and abilities God has given to me. I encourage the development of lay and rostered leaders. At times I must challenge unhelpful or destructive behavior. God keeps agitating me to find new ways of serving God's mission through healthy congregations and our regional work.

What gives me the greatest joy is watching people grow in capacity, congregations grow healthier and people see how they are a part of God's mission for the world in their daily callings. I love our synod and people but I am restless to see our congregations and leaders find new ways of engaging those who are less active in our congregations and the growing number of people who are not connected to God's Church or hearing the Good News in Word and Sacrament. I am an evangelizing leader.

3. Describe your vision of ministry of the bishop: (2015)

"The Equipment Room" is still the sign on my office door. We focus on "engaging leaders, equipping congregations and serving in God's world" as we seek to boldly walk in Christ's mission. I long to deepen the local understanding of synod. Each of the baptized are synod ministers. The synod is not the staff in Redwood Falls, but each of the leaders and congregations serving the mission of God in the world, community and their congregation. Our particular synod in Southwestern Minnesota is called to invite all people to a deeper faith, identify their gifts, develop their capacity and help people see how they are on a daily mission trip to share/live the Good News in what we do and say in our everyday life. I seek to be a pastor to the whole overseeing the life of our synod and engaging also in the regional, churchwide and global work of God's Church. I appreciate and value our tradition but also know we are called to be a part of the current Lutheran movement of Christians who value the centrality of the cross and focus on our gracious God. Inviting people deeper in practicing their faith personally and communally with visionary willingness to explore new ways of being and doing church is part of the work of oversight. I love to encourage, learn from and challenge pastors, lay staff and leaders to follow Jesus in our time in an honest, realistic and compassionate way. In a time of breathtaking change and complicated issues, God will amaze us when we focus on what we share, our calling to follow Jesus, living as Good News people who share the grace that has claimed us.

4. If you were elected bishop, what would be your focus of ministry? – 2015

The Gospel we know in and through Jesus Christ would be my focus. To serve that Gospel I would continue to call congregations and our institutions to focus on equipping the saints and engaging our local mission fields. I would be encouraging people to deeper faith, hope and love through faith practices that grow people as followers of Jesus. One of those practices is inviting, inviting people into the community of Jesus and deeper in faith, hope and love. We need to continue to sustain the identification, development and support of pastors and other rostered leaders. But we need to deepen our work of equipping lay people for ministry. In addition to Equipping Days we need to start having Equipping Deeper Days to grow people's capacity to serve in particular ways in their local mission field or congregation. We want to build on the growing sense that we are a mission synod. The synod exists to participate in God's work of growing Christians in southwestern Minnesota and around the world. God's Spirit is working in congregations, in all their many forms, to grow Christians. Christians are sent to love and serve God's world. They do that personally and through institutions and organizations that carry on the work of Christ on our behalf. Much of the synod's work and the bishop's work is tending the lives of congregations and their leaders. We need to keep asking, "How can we best serve the mission field of today and tomorrow?"

Describe your understanding of the relationship between the synod staff and the congregations' ministry partners: (2015)

My deep dream is for a day when every baptized one understands that they are missionaries (sent ones), every rostered leader understands themselves to be mission directors and every congregation/institution understands itself to be a mission station. The synod staff is called to shepherd congregational pastors, staff and institutions deeper into the mystery of the life of Christ and to care for our synod's ministry partners –congregations, camps, social service agencies, colleges, seminaries, churchwide ministries and companion synod. Congregations also have local ministry partners in local agencies and ecumenical partners. The synod staff serve as coaches, catalysts for change, reminders of our living tradition for local expressions of God's Church and representatives to the larger church. We give thanks to God for all the ways God's mission happens in many different ways.

Our synod and congregations need to keep wrestling with the question, "What is God's preferred and promised future for our work together?" Another way we keep framing this question is, "What will best serve the Gospel?" When we share the gifts God has graciously given to us, "we have everything that we need" for our mission and ministry in Christ's name.