

Think You're Called to be Bishop???

A Discernment Tool for Ministers of Word and Sacrament

INTRODUCTION

The following questions have been prepared to assist ministers of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) who may consider leaving their name in the balloting process for the next bishop of the New Jersey Synod during the assembly scheduled for June 5-7, 2025. They are designed to help ministers determine if their names should be maintained or removed from a nominating ballot based on the gifts and abilities that a bishop is expected to bring to the role according to our governing documents. These questions are for personal use and are not intended to pre-identify potential nominees.

QUESTIONS

1. The New Jersey Synod Constitution provides a procedure for the election of a bishop. (S9.04). If your name appears on the ecclesiastical ballot, would you perceive that God is calling you to this position? If so, write a brief reflection characterizing your perception of this call.
2. The Constitution of the New Jersey Synod states: **The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.** (S8.11)

What are some of your strengths, gifts, and competencies that would support your work as the pastor of the New Jersey Synod?

3. The bishop is to be a teacher. (S8:12. a.)

How have you exercised the role of teacher in your current ministry? How would you approach the role of teacher once you become bishop? What topics might you explore?

4. The bishop has the authority to exercise solely the church's power to ordain approved candidates for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament and as ministers of Word and Service. (S8:12. c.-d.)

What gifts and competencies best prepare you to work with those in the candidacy process? What word of encouragement and wisdom would you share with those seeking approval for offices of public ministry?

5. The bishop is to exercise leadership in the mission of the church. (S8:12. g.)

Reflecting on your leadership style, what attributes make you a capable leader? What leadership skills do you believe you would need to cultivate to serve the office of bishop?

6. The bishop serves as the president of the synod corporation and is the chief executive and administrative officer of the synod. The New Jersey Synod Constitution outlines the administrative responsibilities of the bishop. (S8:12. i. 1-12)

What are some of the gifts you bring that would support your work in synod administration? Have you been diligent in preparing reports required in your ministry context, including timely filing of the annual report for congregations to the NJ Synod? How does the work of administration serve the ministry of the New Jersey Synod?

7. The New Jersey Synod Office is in Hamilton Square. The work of the bishop involves extensive travel throughout New Jersey and, as a member of the Conference of Bishops, to Chicago. Additional domestic and international travel may be required.

If elected Bishop, are you prepared to relocate, if necessary, to a commutable distance of the New Jersey Synod Office? If elected Bishop, are you prepared to drive the distances required; understanding that travel may include early morning starts and late evenings? Are you comfortable driving in urban and rural areas, and suburban communities?

8. The reconciling love of God in Christ brings peace. Yet, the world we live in is filled with injustice and our society is increasingly polarized. Neighbors find themselves alienated from one another. Racism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia, and Christian Nationalism are just some of the platforms of evil requiring a response from this Church.

If elected Bishop, are you ready and willing to address such concerns advocating for the marginalized and oppressed, proclaiming the truth in love, striving to dismantle structures that dehumanize, and seeking to promote understanding in our synod, congregations, and the communities in which we live?

9. One of the responsibilities of the bishop is to administer the constitutionally established process for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod (S8.12. h. 2).

If elected bishop, are you ready to assume these responsibilities? Do you believe you have the gifts required to facilitate conflict resolution and administer discipline when required?

Boundary violations and clergy misconduct can be particularly challenging situations to address. Sometimes the bishop is required to make statements to the media and to offer depositions in legal proceedings.

Are you assured that you have the skill set to confidently collaborate with legal counsel and the capability to address such circumstances?