



## Discernment and Calling of the Bishop of the Nebraska Synod ELCA

The following is an outline of the process for calling a Bishop to the Nebraska Synod based on the Nebraska Synod Constitution.

### **Spiritual Perspective on the Process**

While employing some of the same tools commonly used in the election of officers, the process of calling a Bishop is much more a *discernment* and *selection* process led by the Holy Spirit. It is a process that asks us, “What is God’s will for the Nebraska Synod and whom can we call to help lead us on that journey?” This is an important distinction from the political campaigns of society around us. But as the church, we are called to be different.

### **Who elects the Bishop?**

The Bishop will be elected by the voting members at the Nebraska Synod Assembly scheduled to be held June 2-4, 2022, in Kearney.

### **Who can serve as Bishop?**

The Bishop must be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He or she is not required to be serving in a call in the Nebraska Synod at the time of election.

### **What is the term of office for Bishop?**

The term of office for Bishop is six years, and there are no term limits for Bishop in the Nebraska Synod.

### **What are the Bishop’s primary responsibilities?**

Chapter 8 of the Nebraska Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions outlines the responsibilities of the Bishop. The Bishop serves as the synod’s pastor and is called to administer sacraments, preach, provide pastoral care, ordain, install, advise and counsel, interpret and advocate, and serve as the synodical ecumenical officer. The Bishop also serves as the synod’s chief executive and administrative officer, overseeing and administering the work of the synod and supervising the leadership of other officers and staff.

### **Who may participate in the Bishop pre-identification and nomination process?**

The following persons are eligible to participate in the mission cluster unit meetings in February where initial nominees for Bishop are identified: elected Synod Assembly lay voting members from congregations; Synod Council members; ministers of Word and Service and Word and Sacrament under call, retired and on leave from call on the roster of the Nebraska Synod, and Parish Ministry Associates who have been authorized by the Bishop of the Nebraska Synod to serve a congregation in lieu of a rostered minister. If a congregation has not yet elected its 2022 Synod Assembly voting members at the time of the cluster meeting, the 2021 Synod Assembly voting members are eligible to participate.

### **How are candidates nominated?**

Nominating ballots are cast at February mission cluster unit meetings, as required by the Synod Constitution. A candidate's consent is not required for consideration at this stage. For the purpose of nominating candidates for Bishop, the following clusters will gather:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corridor       | <input type="checkbox"/> Northeast     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elkhorn Valley | <input type="checkbox"/> Panhandle     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fremont Area   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pony Express  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homestead      | <input type="checkbox"/> Prairie       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lewis & Clark  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rolling Hills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lincoln Area   | <input type="checkbox"/> Seed Planters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metro East     | <input type="checkbox"/> Tumbleweed    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metro West     | <input type="checkbox"/> Two Rivers    |

Because the Synod Constitution requires the mission cluster units to meet on the same day at least 90 days prior to the Synod Assembly, **Saturday, February 5, 2022** has been designed as the date for clusters to meet and cast nominating ballots. In the event of inclement weather, clusters are directed to meet on **Saturday, February 12, 2022**.

Two ballots shall be cast at each cluster unit meeting. The first ballot shall be a nominating ballot for voting members to offer the names of individuals they wish to be considered.

Following the completion and announcement of results from the first ballot, a second ballot shall be cast by the voting members. The second ballot will be made up of only the names of those persons who received votes on the first ballot.

The names of the five persons receiving the greatest number of votes on the second ballot (plus ties) shall be reported to the Synod Council Vice President on the first working day following the cluster unit meeting. For meetings held on February 5, the reporting day is **Monday, February 7, 2022**. For meetings held on February 12, the reporting day is **Monday, February 14, 2022**.

If fewer than five candidates are nominated on the first ballot, the second ballot may be dispensed with and the names of the candidates reported directly to the Synod Council Vice President using the same procedures as above.

### **How do candidates consent to their nomination?**

Each of the persons nominated by a cluster will be contacted by the Synod Council Vice President to determine his or her willingness to be a candidate for Bishop. All persons consenting to their nomination will be required to submit biographical data (using a uniform format) to the Synod Office by **Monday, April 4, 2022**. The background information will be distributed to all Synod Assembly voting members no later than **Monday, May 2, 2022**.

### **How is the election conducted at Synod Assembly?**

The Bishop is selected by ecclesiastical ballot. The first ballot at the Synod Assembly shall include the names of persons who consented to candidacy following their nomination at the February cluster unit meetings. The names of other ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament may be written in on the first ballot. If a candidate receives three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the first ballot, he or she shall be deemed elected as Bishop.

If a second ballot is necessary, the names of candidates who received votes on the first ballot and have not chosen to withdraw from consideration shall appear on the second ballot. If a candidate receives three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot, he or she shall be deemed elected as Bishop.

If necessary, the third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot. Biographical data for the persons whose names shall appear on the third ballot shall be printed and distributed to members of the Assembly prior to the third ballot. Two-thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the third ballot.

If no one receives the necessary two-thirds vote on the third ballot, the three persons receiving the highest number of votes (plus ties) shall be invited to address the assembly. After candidates have addressed the Assembly, a fourth ballot shall be taken. Sixty percent of the legal votes cast on the fourth ballot shall be necessary for election.

If necessary, beginning with the fifth ballot, a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot.

<b>Ballot</b>	<b>Names Included</b>	<b>Votes Needed to Elect</b>
First, Ecclesiastical (nominating) ballot	Any minister of Word and Sacrament on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is eligible.	3/4 legal votes cast (75%)
Second	Ministers of Word and Sacrament nominated on the first ballot who have not withdrawn their names.	3/4 legal votes cast (75%)
Third	Seven nominees (plus ties) who received the greatest number of votes cast on the second ballot.	2/3 legal votes cast (66.7%)
Fourth	Three nominees (plus ties) who received the greatest number of Votes cast on the third ballot.	60% legal votes cast
Fifth	Two nominees (plus ties) who received the greatest number of votes cast.	Majority of legal votes cast (50% +1)

**Who conducts the Bishop election at Synod Assembly?**

A representative from the ELCA Churchwide Office will conduct all aspects of the bishop election process during the Synod Assembly.

**Who will oversee the bishop election process for the Nebraska Synod?**

In November 2021, the Nebraska Synod Council appointed a Bishop Election Committee to help insure a fair and impartial election and call process. The members of the committee are:

- Rev. Steve Berke, Cozad
- Ramona Edwards, Bennington (Committee Chair)
- Emma Grinde, Intern, The Lutheran Center, Lincoln
- Deacon Karen Melang, Fremont
- Dara Troutman, Synod Council Vice President, Lincoln

**What role can others play?**

There is an important role for everyone in the Nebraska Synod to play in the selection and calling of the next Bishop. We ask that everyone in all our congregations would be in continual prayer about God's will for the leadership of our Synod, as well as to listen and discern about God's calling for the Nebraska Synod and how we can best be the church together in the months and years ahead.

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

Information will be posted to the Synod website, nebraskasynod.org.

**Whom should I contact if I have additional questions about the Bishop election?**

Please direct your questions to the Chair of the Bishop Election Committee or the Vice President of the Nebraska Synod.

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