

Rev. Gregory Berger



Ordination Date: June 17, 1990

Education & Earned Degrees:

Master of Divinity, 1986-1990,
Gettysburg Lutheran Theological
Seminary, Gettysburg, PA

Bachelor of Science, Social Sciences,
1981-1984, Peru State College, Peru,
NE

Attended, Agriculture, 1975-1976,

University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE

Current & Previously Held Positions

Messiah Lutheran Church, Pastor, 2000-present, Ralston, NE

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Pastor, 1994-2000, Hooper, NE

St. Paul Lutheran Church, Associate Pastor, 1990-1994, Grand
Island, NE

Peru Community Church, Disciples of Christ Lay Minister and
UMHE Campus Pastor to Peru State College, 1983-1986,
Peru, NE

Self Employed Farmer, 1976-1986, Auburn, NE

Please tell us a bit about yourself.

Born and raised on a farm outside of Auburn, Nebraska, I grew up in a Lutheran home, baptized, confirmed and married at St. Paul Auburn. My first love was always the farm life. After a year of college, I returned home to farm with Dad and marry my high school sweetheart, Kim. Kim's passion has always been teaching. She currently teaches second grade in the Ralston Public Schools. While I loved farming, it was evident that was not going to be our life.

My faith and the church had always been in the very fabric of who I am. I had found a natural fit serving in the church as worship leader, teacher, council member. So, under the mentorship and encouragement of my pastor and my congregation, after ten years of farming, I entered the rostered ministry. Kim and I have two sons. James is married to Mel and they have a daughter, Collins. Jonathan is engaged to Megan and they will be marrying this July. I love putting in the yard, dabbling in woodworking and most of all, family time. One of my greatest joys comes from taking it all in as the family gathers together to share, laugh and cry.

Describe what brings you energy as you consider the role of Bishop and how this might be a best use of your gifts, skills, and passion.

Despite huge challenges and incredible change, this is an exciting time to be the Church! It is energizing, knowing God is at work in our lives, our congregations and our communities! It is a joy to see what new things are surfacing as we creatively proclaim the Gospel and love our neighbor. Much has and continues to be shaken in our world, society and church. But as God's people, we know what is unshakeable - the Kingdom of God (Heb 12).

As I consider the role of Bishop, I would seek to be a clear voice calling us to remember this is not our work but God's - in new ministries or in sustaining existing work that continues to be relevant; in the struggles of conflict and divisiveness; or in worship; in the administrative minutia or the casting of vision.

My gifts lend themselves to connecting with people through understanding and empathy. Also being able to see the big picture and how each part fits within a greater vision. I'm not afraid to try new things - even at the risk of failing. My passion is for all people to see themselves as beloved children of God, graced, forgiven, loved.

As a candidate for Bishop, how would you describe God's call for the Nebraska Synod and your relation to this call?

"Together," is the word that comes to mind. We are the Body of Christ, together in this expression we call the Nebraska Synod. God is calling us to proclaim the Gospel - in all its wonderful beauty and diversity -- together. We are a church of over 87,000 members, worshiping and serving out of 234 mission centers, in nine mission fields and 14 serving arms, staffed by over 400 ministers and countless other lay leaders, (credit: Bp. deFreese). Our call remains the same. How we live out that call needs exploration, experimentation and evaluation. The Bishop will be leading us into "ventures unknown" on paths "yet untrodden, through perils unknown." (ELW 431). This is an exciting time to be the Church, getting to be a part of God's new thing. I love hiking unknown paths, trusting in God's guidance and running to catch up with what God is up to. At the same time, even when the future excites us, remembering back to honor - and grieve - what was, will be important. There is a lot of death to be mourned even as we celebrate resurrection and new life.

Reflect on the opportunities and challenges facing the Nebraska Synod in the next 6 years.

The survey captures well the challenges we face moving forward. It makes me think of coming to the aid of neighbors after a tornado. You know or can imagine the devastation. Buildings with no roofs, twisted on their foundations or completely gone. Crops, livestock destroyed. Perhaps even the unthinkable and loved ones lost.

A storm of change has blown through our lives and the church. As followers of Jesus we have the opportunity to be first responders, offering the first aid of compassion, and meeting immediate needs. We have the opportunity to help others get their bearing in a world turned upside down, offering community support and care as loss is grieved. Then we have the opportunity to rebuild together. The challenges include grieving and lamenting properly. We have to move through denial, anger, blame, depression. Then, when ready, we move forward intentionally to rebuild for the future. What can stay? What can be repaired? What needs to be new? The temptation in the church is to just keep putting used siding over the cracks and rot because we love that old building so much.