

Rev. Scott Johnson



Ordination Date: August 9, 2003

Education & Earned Degrees:
BA, Classics, 1992-1998, University of
Nebraska - Lincoln, Lincoln, NE

M.Div., 1999-2003, Luther Seminary,
St. Paul, MN

St. Petri Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pastor, 2012-2019,
Story City, IA

University Lutheran Center - Iowa State University, Campus
Pastor, 2008-2012, Ames, IA

Peace Lutheran Church, Pastor, 2003-2007, Barrett, MN

Luther Seminary, Teaching Assistant, 2002-2003, St. Paul, MN

Current & Previously Held Positions

Midland University, Director of Campus Ministry, 2019-present,
Fremont, NE

Please tell us a bit about yourself.

Farm boy at heart. Christian by baptism. Lutheran by conviction. Loving, if flawed, husband, father, son, and brother. Musician. Reader. Enneagram 7. Lawn, landscape, & home repair enthusiast. Actor. People-loving introvert. Church-loving questioner.

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.

After nearly 20 years of service in other synods, it's been interesting to return to Nebraska, re-establish former connections, and make new ones as well. I've always been a Nebraskan at heart, and I likely always will. But I've seen and experienced things in my years "away" that have widened my perspective and imparted some wisdom I might not have gained had I spent my entire career "back home." I'm not the person I was when I left for seminary in 1999, but Nebraska has changed a lot in those years as well, and things will continue to change in the years ahead as well. Regardless of the outcome of this election, I feel God is calling all of us to seek faithful change together as the Nebraska Synod moves into God's future.

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

I'm a dedicated reader of German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and in our current circumstances I see a lot of what Bonhoeffer described in his letters to his friend Eberhard Bethge from prison in 1944: "We are moving toward a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious any more...What do a church, a community, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life mean in a religionless world? How do we speak ... in a 'secular' way about God? In what way are we 'religionless-secular' Christians...those who are called forth, not regarding ourselves from a religious point of view as specially favored, but rather as belonging wholly to the world?" In other words, how do we live out this bold, evangelical faith in a world which no longer cares or even notices? How will we be people of faith when every last ounce of privilege & deference for religion has been forgotten? We will need to be even more of a faithful community "with one another/for one another" (another Bonhoeffer-ism) than we are today.

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

The future could be seen as pretty bleak for religious faith in 21st century America. Identification with a particular faith tradition continues to fall, while the fastest growing segment of the population is the "nones," particularly among younger generations. For centuries, we were an ethnic-based faith (for example, the Swedish Lutherans who established Salem Lutheran Church in Wakefield, where I was born and raised), and even those who didn't share that ethnicity often shared that faith out of sheer inertia: "We've ALWAYS been Lutheran!" The power of that inertial faith is nearly exhausted: our opportunity and challenge is to begin the hard work of opening ourselves to the power that will drive the church toward God's future. More than ever, the church that is coming will not look anything like the church we once knew, but I believe the death of the church that was can be what God uses to raise up the church that will be.