

Rev. Casey Lieneman



Ordination Date: August 26, 2012

Education & Earned Degrees:
Bachelors Degree in Education,
Social Studies, 2008, UNL,
Lincoln, NE

Mastor of Divinity, 2012, Lutheran
Theological Seminary at
Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Current & Previously Held Positions

Redeemer Lutheran, Pastor, 2020-Current, Hooper, NE
Church of the Covenant, Pastor, 2017-2020, Grafton, WV
Christ Lutheran, Pastor, 2012-2016, Pierce, NE

Please tell us a bit about yourself.

I am a child of God. A loving husband to Corey and a father of two quickly growing boys. I am blessed to be the Pastor at Redeemer Lutheran in Hooper. The people in Hooper have a strong faith, a love of Jesus, and an admirable desire to do good in the world.

I was born and raised on a farm in southeast Nebraska. Zion Lutheran of Pickrell, fondly known as the cathedral of the cornfields, was my church home for many years. I began hearing God's call to enter ministry as I battled a misdiagnosed brain tumor at the age of 12. It was during this time that I learned that even when everything seems dark and scary in life, God is always by our side.

I love baseball and I am a passionate Nebraska Cornhusker Football fan. Better days are ahead Husker fans! I strive to get to the gym first thing in the morning. I am also passionate about evangelism and growing the church. I take very seriously Jesus' command to spread the Gospel and make believers of all nations (Matt. 28:19). Finally, I love to laugh and include a joke in my Sunday message every week.

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.

I love being with people. One of the joys of being a pastor is the connection made with people from all aspects of life. The church is a place many find community and connection that can be lacking in other areas of modern life.

I also have a passion for teaching. Christian education for all ages is something I truly enjoy. I hold a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska in Secondary Education and am a teacher at heart. The skills I have developed through my experiences as a substitute teacher, a middle school tutor, and a student teacher at junior and senior high schools, are invaluable in my ministry. Learning and growing in Christ is a lifelong voyage that I cherish doing alongside fellow Christians.

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

As a native Nebraskan I appreciate the desire most Cornhuskers have in avoiding the nasty political fights that have engulfed our nation. Politics have taken over nearly all aspects of our lives today. Too many conversations on Facebook or with our neighbor involve politics.

When the Herodians tried to involve Jesus in politics (Matthew 22:16), by asking whether people should pay taxes to the Romans, Jesus answered their question by returning the focus back to what truly matters. God. Jesus says, "give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's."

Too often I believe the wider church has responded to current events, not from faith and scripture, but from political leanings. To be clear, this is not only an ELCA problem but a problem many denominations have fallen prey. The church needs to stand separate from politics. The church is not democratic. The church is not republican. We are followers of Jesus. I believe the Nebraska Synod should help lead the charge in this desire to decouple the church from politics.

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

Three years ago, the ELCA published a study on future attendance in the church. This study projected the total national attendance at our Lutheran churches would drop from 900,000 people per weekend in 2017 down to approximately 16,000 people in 2044. As a pastor, who hopes to still be a pastor in 2044, this is startling. If true, those numbers tell us the ELCA will no longer be in 2044. Those are only projections, but the reality is many of our Lutheran churches are in decline. We need to have a clearly defined gameplan moving forward.

Our churches must be places that our people finding meaning, are challenged by God's word, and find community. I believe the Nebraska Synod will need to get very creative in the decade ahead. People no longer feel obligated to come to church. Our churches need to be places people WANT to come because it positively impacts their lives.