



# 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly Biographical Reports

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## 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly

# Candidates for Bishop Biographical Reports

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NOTE: Pre-Identified candidates are listed in alphabetical order. This is not a full list of candidates as nominations will be taken from the floor at Synod Assembly.



# 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.

# Rev. Dr. Sarah Cordray



**Ordination Date:** July 10, 2005

**Education & Earned Degrees:**

Doctor of Ministry, Congregational Mission and Leadership, 2012-2017, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

Master of Divinity, 2001-2005, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA

Elementary Education Major, 1989-1993, Luther College, Decorah, IA

Rockridge School District, 3rd grade teacher, 1994-1996, Taylor Ridge, IL

Hope Lutheran Church, Director of Youth and Family Ministries, 1996-2001, Fresno, CA

First Lutheran Church, Associate Pastor, 2005-2009, Aitkin, MN

Tri-County Lutheran Parish (4 congregations), pastor/lead of staff, 2009-2014, Chappell, Lodgepole, and Oshkosh, NE

Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, Senior Pastor, 2014-present, Syracuse, NE

## Current & Previously Held Positions

### Please tell us a bit about yourself.

Serving the Lord and walking with God's people to discover who they are and what their purpose is for God's kingdom is the passion God has given me. Serving in education, youth ministry, and congregations has given me opportunities to be a creative, focused leader who empowers groups to discern God's purpose. I carry a contagious enthusiasm that is lovingly direct and honest, as well as spirit-filled. Connecting with all ages and considering various opinions have led me in strengthening community by finding the middle ground centered in Christ. I have a keen sense of Lutheran theology and have the ability to relate it to today's world. Serving as a lead of staff has allowed me the opportunity to administer from areas of worship design to budget matters. Having strong organizational skills allow me to lead as one who is detailed with an eye on the big picture of mission and vision. Volunteering in the synod has also given me opportunities to serve on Synod Council twice, be a member of the Synod Vision team, serve as chairperson for the Synod Vision Oversight team, and serve as a team member and coach for the Vitality Initiative for Congregations.

### 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.

The ability to formally work with multiple congregations in the process of revitalization, the process of rediscovering our middle ground centered in Jesus Christ, and addressing the ministry leader shortage through creative, adaptive processes bring me the most energy as I consider what my role as bishop would be. The use of skills in Congregational Mission and Leadership, which I have developed through education and practice both in congregations in the Panhandle and eastern Nebraska, can best be used in the process of revitalization as identity, neighbors, and purpose are discovered for churches in today's world. Leading a congregation through a pandemic, a divisive society, and conflict utilizes my gifts and skills of authentic work on the frontline for guiding us through a time of rediscovering our middle ground given in Christ. Addressing the ministry leader shortage through creative, adaptive processes allows me to offer my experiences of working in a variety of staff positions as clergy and a lay person, as well as training and supervising PMAs and interns. I sense the Holy Spirit moving me to share these gifts and skills with many.

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

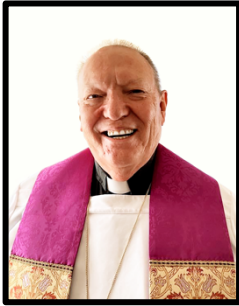
As Nebraska is in the geographical middle of our country, the Nebraska Synod is called to be a model and teacher in our society and world of how such a diverse people with a wide spectrum of convictions can find middle ground through their faith in Jesus Christ. Already respected as a synod in the ELCA, we have a call to stay together and connected through the gifts of forgiveness and grace given through Jesus Christ. I also believe with such a middle ground discovered in Christ, we, the Nebraska Synod, are called to faithfully keep planting those seeds of faith even amid such challenges, pivot with the waters of change, and keep the main thing – the main thing. Pressures and tuggings of our society have caused so many to lose focus, but we, the Nebraska Synod, turn our eyes to God's call which centers and strengthens us to face today's and tomorrow's world with trust in God and each other. God still needs the church until Christ returns, and God calls me as such a leader to empower us to come to the middle ground where we are heard, nourished, and sent by the God who meets us in the center of the cross.

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

In an interview about church, "I think we got lost in trying to be all things to all people." Also said, "We need to return to the basics of who we are and what we are called to do." I believe we as the Nebraska Synod are not called to be all things to all people, but rather return to the basics of Jesus Christ and the way of his kingdom which he died to bring. In so doing, we are centered in God's identity and purpose to meet the challenges of leadership decline, loss of membership, and division amongst us, and within culture. Through the basics, we rediscover tools to live in a covenantal way of life in partnership and forgiveness. These basics draw us to our identity as the Priesthood of all believers to seek methods of empowerment. These basics remind us that God calls us through purpose to bring the good news to where people are as Christ did, which will cause examination of a culture of membership and methods of measurement for vitality. The basics of Christ teach us to live into God's mission and vision as we care for those Christ did while countering the kingdom of the world. We cannot be all things to all people, but we can return to the basics in who we are through him and our purpose together to find opportunity in such challenges



# Rev. Dr. David Cox



**Ordination Date:** May 18, 1980

**Education & Earned Degrees:**  
PhD, Philology, Biblical Studies,  
University of St Andrews, Scotland  
1993

MS-LIS, Library Information Science  
Administration, University of Illinois  
Urbana Champaign, 2013

STM, Biblical Theology, Wartburg  
Theological Seminary, 1988, Dubuque, Iowa

M.Div., Wartburg Theological Seminary, 1979, Dubuque, Iowa

B.A, Religion, Classical Languages, French, Pacific Lutheran  
University, Parkland, WA 1977

## Current & Previously Held Positions

New Mexico Tech, Director of Library and Office for Student  
Learning, June 2017 to present, Socorro, New Mexico

St John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Interim Senior Pastor,  
November 2013-June 2017, Norfolk, Nebraska

St Mark Lutheran Church, Senior Interim Pastor, June 2011-  
September 2012, Sioux City, Iowa

St Luke Lutheran Church, Senior Interim Pastor, July 2009-June  
2011

Grace Lutheran Church, Senior Interim Pastor, July 2007-June  
2009, Spirit Lake, Iowa

## Please tell us a bit about yourself.

I am a child of God. I discerned I was called to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in childhood and into adulthood. Born and raised in Bellingham, Washington, I was ordained on the day Mt Saint Helens erupted! I am a father and grandfather: I am the blessed parent of two adoptive children, and a high functioning Autistic child. My adult life has had its feet in both the Church and Academia. My vocation has been cultivated by these two great influences. As a pastor and librarian, my passion for learning, information, building of community and inclusivity are a journey of love and search for wisdom. I love people. I seek for Jesus and the Image of God alive and present in others. I am an ally to LGBTQIAP+ persons, and see opportunity in the exchange of love, wisdom, and insight. Compassion is my practice. I believe, and seek to live in the grace of God in Christ Jesus. I seek inclusion, welcome, and equity for all people. Serving the Gospel; reading and teaching the Bible; and the development of community and individual Spirituality are my great loves within the Body of Christ. Anti-Racism, and finding authentic compassion, which creates community are core values.

## 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.

My faith in Christ, professional life and study have prepared me to connect with others to engage and support a servant faith which changes people and circumstances for the better in communities and the church. My world view and faith merge: based on the energy of prayer, the faith of Christ, and the Gospel which makes all things new. Having been called and claimed by Christ in baptism, marked with the Cross of Christ forever gives me energy in living each day by the "yes" of God's grace in Christian community. All of the above fuel my desire to lead a diverse group of believers in the transformative gospel. All of the above will need intentional devotion, prayer, and willingness to move together as one. Having served a variety of venues as an Intentional Transformational Pastor has given me the vision to listen to people, learn to love them, and then lead with a common vision centered in Christ. Having served as an Assistant to the Bishop of the Central/Southern Illinois Synod has taught me and given insight on the needs of congregations, organizations and extended avenues for mission and ministry. I have some idea of this calling to service. I bring various skill sets, but am a leader who seeks and respects the skill sets of others.

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

God's call for the Nebraska Synod is to prayerfully hear the Gospel and celebrate its promise with action; follow the example of Jesus in approaching people with Jesus' sequence of showing Compassion, creating Community; and then building Commitment within individuals, congregations, organizations and the greater community for Christ and the Gospel. This is a process requiring intentionality, understanding, and courage. The generous people, resources, and leaders of the Nebraska Synod are the key to success. Both the gifts of gentleness and restlessness are essential, so that the church moves forward with common vision and ministry. We put our hands on the plow, find our mark, and look forward. As individuals, congregations, pastors and synods within our ELCA synod, we are called to the crossroads of faith and life. We need to meet at the gate areas of our communities, and then work together to move beyond Status Quo comforts to see the edges and margins-and be Christ to one another. All of our opportunities and challenges as the Nebraska Synod ELCA are found in our ethic of grace, to love God and Neighbor. Discipleship, Faith Formation, and Spirituality center on an Evangelical Justice. Being Christ to the neighbor, the poor, and the voiceless is a center of our actions and intents.

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

Reading the Bishop Election Survey is both eye opening, hopeful, and clear. The Office of the Bishop is essential for creating collaborative action for ministry, proclamation, and service. People are naturally concerned about membership declines, the need for Spiritual and Theological Formation. Being centered in God in Christ to mend what is broken and to understand that Evangelism and Justice are intertwined. Working together to envision and create a more effective Nebraska Synod structure, with the hope for more communication and mission clarity. We know our needs as a strong rural community state with large population centers at times creates discord as to how the Gospel compels us to serve and do ministry. Finances come to the fore, and the need for Pastors, Deacons, and Parish Ministry Associates to lead in ministry in smaller parishes. Creativity to find new alliances, with congregations sharing ministry needs together, using Ecumenical Partners as area ministry areas are crucial avenues for regenerating new life together. So is recognizing resources of every kind, and welcoming new ideas and options. An Asset Based Approach is better able to consider pathways towards life rather than a sense of despair in our needs. How do we move forward? Our opportunities are found in cooperation, not in isolation. We are one community in Christ, together.

# Rev. Dr. Scott Frederickson



**Ordination Date:** October 12, 1991

**Education & Earned Degrees:**

BA, English, 1981-1985, Gustavus Adolphus College, St Peter MN

Graduate School, English, 1985-1986, University of Texas – Austin, TX

M.Div., 1987-1991, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Chicago IL

Ph.D., Systematic Theology, 1994-2001, Luther Seminary, St Paul MN

**Current & Previously Held Positions**

First Lutheran Church, Senior Pastor, 2014-Current, Blair, NE

Prairie Table Ministries, Mission Developer, 2008-2011, Bismarck, ND

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Discipleship Pastor, 2003-2007, Bismarck, ND

Luther Seminary, Affiliated Faculty, Congregational Mission and Leadership, 2003-2016, St Paul, MN

Church Innovations, Congregational Analyst, 1995-2010, St Paul, MN

**Please tell us a bit about yourself.**

I bring change. For 31 years I have created and innovated ministry opportunities for people in the context where they live. My ministry uses the unique talents and gifts of people, inclusive of all genders, races, sexualities, and economic classes. I believe God calls each person and the communities where they reside to live lives that grow God's mission for a flourishing world. In my experience that has meant I must bring change.

I believe the cross of Christ empowers radical freedom for all of God's creation. Through our living in the power of the Holy Spirit we are invited by God to use this radical freedom to help and walk with our neighbors. This has led me over the years to engage in conservation of land and natural resources; hunger ministries that serve local, national, and international people in need; and to preach an unflinching Gospel of God's steadfast mercy and love.

I am who I am because God placed me in a family of unconditional love. My parents, my wife and children, and my grandson are the ground for my understanding of God's steadfast mercy and grace.

**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 am excited to see what God has been doing in the Nebraska Synod, not only over the last 150 years, but especially since 2020. I believe God has a preferred future for every person in Nebraska, and for all the congregations of the Nebraska Synod. My gift as a teacher is to help us find ways that we can continue to strengthen our communities, our congregations, and our neighbors, as we seek to follow God's mission of mercy and grace.

I assume that there are many changes before us. Some of them will be easily adapted and others will require time, patience, and compromise. I believe I have the skillset to manage those kinds of conversations and I look forward to hearing the stories.

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

I believe God is calling the people and the congregations of the Nebraska Synod to be people of creativity, forgiveness, patience, and courage, as we engage in difficult conversations for the future of the Lutheran tradition. Through the Bishop's Office, this call extends to each of us who comprise the Nebraska Synod and the congregations that we call home, but also extends to our relationships with our ministry partners, others within our Lutheran family, and with ecumenical and interfaith people of God.

I am confident that as the Bishop of the Nebraska Synod, we can be a leader in initiating the conversations and changes that will drive ministry opportunities toward how we can be Lutheran together in Nebraska, in the United States, and throughout the world.

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

One challenge is how do we listen together, as people who have experienced being ignored, undervalued, disregarded, overlooked, or neglected? Since we come from such diverse arenas of wealth, status, power, and privilege, listening with others is difficult for everyone. The challenge is to not push away from the table of conversation. This challenge leads to a great opportunity because we are all equal in our current levels of fear, unease, and dissatisfaction. The opportunity exists to build relationships of trust and joy centered in the promise of God, in Jesus Christ, to be heard and valued.

An opportunity in the Nebraska Synod is our immense wealth and resources. The challenge will be to steward those resources in ways that encourage our neighbors, sustain our communities of faith, and continue to provide ministries of meaning. It is not a question of survival, but rather of changing our mindset, to see that spending resources to help and support your neighbor is the joy of the Gospel itself.

# Rev. Randall Gehring



**Ordination Date:** August 27, 1989

**Education & Earned Degrees:**  
BA, Business Administration, 1981-1985, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

MDiv, Theology, 1985-1989, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

Graduate Certificate, Non-profit

Church Leadership, 2020-2021, Dakota Wesleyan University, Mitchell, South Dakota

## **Current & Previously Held Positions**

Our Saviors Lutheran Church, Senior Pastor, 2013-current, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Bethesda Lutheran Church, Senior Pastor, 2004-2013, Ames, Iowa

Bethel Lutheran Church, Senior Pastor, 1997-2004, Wahpeton, North Dakota

Bethel Lutheran Church, Associate Pastor, 1993-1997, Wahpeton, North Dakota

Canton Lutheran Church, Associate Pastor, 1989-1993, Canton, South Dakota

## **Please tell us a bit about yourself.**

I am the son of Clinton (deceased) and Margeret Gehring of Omaha, NE, and the brother of Barbara (Ted) Trede of Treynor, IA and Russell (Mary) Gehring of Omaha, NE. I am happily married to my wife of thirty-seven years, The Rev. Michele (Lage) Gehring, and together we are the proud parents of The Rev. Laura (David) Laughlin of Chaska, MN and The Rev. Thomas Gehring of Chicago, IL. We take great delight in our four-year-old grandson, Oliver Laughlin and enjoy those precious moments we are able to spend together.

I am an avid reader whose list of books to read never seems to grow shorter. I enjoy exercise, particularly bicycling, weightlifting, and hiking. I am a huge fan of all four seasons experienced in the upper Midwest and love being outside as much as possible, especially in a boat fishing in northern Minnesota.

I deeply value the relationships I have with family and close friends and regularly look for opportunities to be together. I have a strong work ethic but also strive to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

## **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 live from a deeply-rooted, authentic, life-long faith in Jesus that has drawn me into a life that utilizes my gifts as a leader to the glory of God. As a servant leader, I seek to listen before I speak, I strive to collaborate rather than dictate, and I serve first and foremost the mission of the Church, believing steadfastly that I serve by virtue of God's call extended to me by the Church. My communication and organization skills and attention to detail serve me well as an administrator. I am an avid and quick learner and I strive to be flexible and adaptable, recognizing that the rate of change in most of our contexts will only continue to accelerate. Despite the challenges of decline facing the Church today, I lead from a perspective of hope believing God is still speaking and acting through the faithful witness of a mission-centered, gospel-proclaiming Church. Finally, I carefully steward the body God has given me so that I might most ably live the life to which God has called me.

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

In a season of decline, I believe the primary challenge facing the Church, including the Nebraska Synod, is to be a mission-centered Church that lives passionately from a position of faith and purpose while adapting to ever-changing contexts. As bishop, I would strive first to align the synod's ministry through intentional strategic planning. Secondly, I would develop an approach to congregational planning that could be adapted to a variety of contexts that would assist congregations and their pastoral leaders in the hard but important work of actively listening to the needs of their communities and then systematically identifying (1) their mission in light of those felt needs, (2) the assets available to them, and (3) the strategies for leveraging those assets for transformational ministry.

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

To me, the number one challenge/opportunity facing the Church, including the Nebraska Synod, is rising above a survival mindset rooted in scarcity to be a people—a Church—in mission for the sake of the world. If all we do is focus on restoring and maintaining what once was, we will eventually become irrelevant and die. If, however, we claim together the vast giftedness of the Church and the mission God has given us to proclaim the Good News of Jesus to a broken world, we will be agents of God's transformational grace in broken world providing hope and healing in ways that the world cannot. This ministry will necessarily draw us into the holy work of standing with those on the margins, proclaiming God's radical love for all people, and striving tirelessly for reconciliation and peace.

# Rev. Dr. Inba Inbarasu



**Ordination Date:** June 12, 2991

**Education & Earned Degrees:**

D. Min. Doctor of Ministry -  
Religion and Health, 2007,  
Chicago Theological Seminary.  
Chicago, Illinois

M.Th. Master of Theology, Specialized in Missiology, 1991,  
SAIACS, Bangalore, Karnataka.

M.A. Master of Arts, Public Administration, 1989,  
S.V.University,Thirupathi, Andhra Pradesh

M.A. Master of Arts, Philosophy, 1986, Osmania University,  
Hyderabad, Andra Pradesh

B.D. - Bachelor of Divinity, 1984, Bishop's College Senate of  
Serampore, Calcutta, West Bengal

**Current & Previously Held Positions**

Immanuel Pathways PACE, Immanuel, Pastor, 2021- Present

Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, Visitation Pastor, 2013-  
2021, Omaha. Nebraska

Faith Ambassador Lutheran Parish, Interim Minister,2019-  
2020, Hooper, Nebraska.

Veterans Administration, Central Alabama Veteran Health  
Care System, ACPE CPE supervisor/Certified Educator and  
clinical staff chaplain, 2017-2018, Tuskegee/Montgomery,  
Alabama

Alegent Health/CHI Health System, CPE Supervisor  
Manager/Program Director,2008-2017, Omaha, Nebraska

**Please tell us a bit about yourself.**

I am blessed by God and claimed in holy baptism at a small Danish Lutheran congregation, India. God was at work through the Danish Missionary Society, who brought the Gospel. I am a member of the Kountze Memorial Lutheran church in Omaha and serving as your pastor at Immanuel pathways PACE ministries, Nebraska synod. I deeply care for mission and ministry of the church and our community. I love to think strategically, organize, and plan a path forward. I pay attention to the details while keeping the big picture. I try to bring relational and caring presence, approachability, hospitality, and empathic listening. I have 36 years of ministry experience from a variety of settings: Pastor in immigrant & shared ministry congregations; urban & rural; Pastor in specialized ministry; teaching in seminary; pastoral care; visitation pastor; clinical pastoral education supervisor. I embrace diversity and differences to work together for common purposes and for the sake of our ministry and witness. Having worked in different cultures, congregations, Federal and Corporate leadership, and non-profit faith/health care institutions, I bring varied experience with global perspective and would like to share the blessings through connecting, inspiring, and empowering through the opportunity of serving the synod.

**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.**

The primary mission of the Bishop is to shepherd the rostered, lay leaders, and congregations to grow deeper in discipleship in Christ, celebrate, proclaim, and embody in our lives/world. The functions of the shepherd are caring, tending, reconciling, sustaining, & leading. This inspires and brings energy as I consider the sacred opportunity and call to serve. I have passion and gifts as a shepherd by building relationship, nourish, cherish, calling, equip, empower, and support lay and rostered leaders. I have an awareness of the great privilege and opportunity to serve with God's people in accompaniment as a team. I bring the following gifts to the office of the bishop: a pastor's heart; theologically reflective mind; soul's desire to serve; obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; attentive listening; conflict management skills; administration; compassion; passion for the Gospel; empathy; and ability to engage and accompany in difficult conversations to help people identify the issues and seek solutions; perseverance; positive attitude; sense of humor; imagination curiosity; and a desire to minister to people/churches.

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

In Nebraska Synod, we are people of God who believe and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the Gospel as the power of God for the Salvation of all who believe. We share core values: we are a church whose unity is in Jesus Christ, who gathers us around word and water, wine, and bread. We are deeply rooted, yet changing and always being made new. I have seen in many ways how God blessed Nebraska synod's 234 congregations. The mission field of Nebraska reflects Christ's love and light in the communities. Seeing the ways God has blessed our members, watching the joy of our members serving, responding to our communities both locally and globally need, is something to behold, but also an opportunity for the bishop to build on. Generations of God's faithful people are built on Jesus Christ's firm foundation. To stand on those broad shoulders and build it further, is a great opportunity to serve.

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

"Filling our Pulpits" a huge concern as reflected in our survey results is both a challenge and an opportunity for innovation and creativity. Some of our national challenges like the decline in church membership, engagement, aging congregations, and decrease in giving will likely continue in the next few years. This calls us to be proactive in building a high performing team of diverse voices focusing on Christ, making disciples, calling, equipping empowering, and supporting effective leaders. The pastoral care with strategic leadership vision is needed to build healthy leaders to form a healthy community, and emphasis on prevention through spiritual and professional support for leaders. Congregational vitality, shared ministry, spiritual direction, faith formation, intergenerational engagement, leadership formation support, and recruitment/retention of leaders are also essential. Call Process has to be creative and effective with mentorship, coaching, and support. We face challenges and opportunity in post pandemic time which taught us to be adoptive, creative, and healing from our grief/loss. We are co-creators, believing in the crucified and risen Christ who will continue to transform us. We can do better when we know ourselves. Together, we can do more with God of Hope as our helper.



# 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.

# 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.

# Rev. Jan Peterson



**Ordination Date:** October 21, 2007

**Education & Earned Degrees:**  
TEEM Certificate Program, 2004-2007, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA

BS Accounting, 1979-1983, Dana College, Blair, NE

## **Current & Previously Held Positions**

Augustana Lutheran Church, Pastor, Nov 2012-Current, Omaha, NE

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Vicar/Associate Pastor, October 2004-October 2012, Omaha, NE

Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Youth Director, September 2002-October 2004

Glenn Kooiker, CPA, Tax Accountant, September 1998-September 2002

First National Bank, Various - last position AVP/Assistant Controller, 1983-1995

## **Please tell us a bit about yourself.**

I am a second-career pastor having spent the first 15 years of my career working in the accounting field both in the banking industry and as a tax accountant. I was born in Council Bluffs, IA and lived there until attending college at Dana College in Blair. My early faith was nurtured by faithful leaders at Saint John Lutheran Church in Council Bluffs. Throughout my life I have been active in the church community to which I belonged at any given time singing, playing hand bells, assisting with worship, teaching Sunday school and Vacation Bible School, co-chairing the congregation's Women of the ELCA and church treasurer among other things.

While attending seminary I served as a Vicar at Holy Cross/Omaha where I also served my first call. I currently serve as the pastor at Augustana Lutheran Church in Omaha. My husband Steve and I have two grown daughters and five grandchildren. In my free time I enjoy spending time with my grandchildren, golfing, and reading.

## **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 am energized by the opportunity to continue building relationships across the Synod. I have served in several different roles in the Synod: LYON Board, Youth Mission trip Co-Chair, Synod Council, Consultation Committee, and the LGBTQIA+ Affirming Team. Serving with people from across the synod has given me a much fuller picture of the many ways in which congregations live out their mission and allowed me to have conversations with people with diverse views.

Though the career fields I've worked in are quite diverse, the gifts needed for each are among those necessary to serve as bishop. In the banking industry I utilized/developed administrative and financial expertise and as a pastor I have used additional gifts for listening, accompanying, mentoring both members and interns in the use of their gifts, and preaching. The Synod bishop serves as both the Pastor and CEO of the Synod. It excites me to consider a call that utilizes both my administrative/financial and pastoral gifts.

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

God calls us to continue God's mission of making disciples and spreading the Gospel message of grace, mercy, and radically inclusive love through word and deed. In a world filled with division, God's church meets this world's division with reconciling love, offering a ministry of reconciliation through honest conversation that respects our differences while affirming that we are all beloved children of God. These conversations teach us that more unites us than divides us, empowering us to work together to serve the hungry, the stranger, the marginalized and the oppressed.

As bishop, I would work with the synodical staff to accompany and collaborate with ministries across the Synod as they live out this mission in the unique ways God calls them in this season of ministry. This accompaniment includes pastoral care, visioning, education, preparation of and recruitment of leaders and administration of Synod business. As we emerge from the necessary separation of the pandemic, building relationships across the Synod and the wider church would be a large focus of the work.

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

Our strongest opportunities arise from our challenges.

The wilderness experience of the pandemic deeply affected our lives. We grieve what's been lost and we long to return to "normal." Yet, wilderness wandering fosters reliance on God and connection to the Spirit. Attuned to the Spirit, we are empowered to imagine new ways of living out God's mission while listening attentively to those who no longer find the church relevant.

The number of openings in the Synod has caused a shortage of transitional pastors to accompany congregations during the call process and longer wait times for their next leader. Amid these delays anxiety understandably rises and concern for the future becomes a focus of the ministry. This moment provides opportunities to continue discerning innovative solutions involving shared ministries with other congregations, ELCA and other ecumenical partners. Additionally, it provides opportunities to expand lay leadership, a space for broadening the definition of the "ideal" candidate for ministry leader, and renewed energy toward encouraging/educating future leaders.



## 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly

# General Nominations Biographical Reports

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NOTE: Pre-Identified candidates are listed in alphabetical order for each ballot. This is not a full list of candidates as nominations will be taken from the floor at Synod Assembly.





# 2022 Nebraska Synod Assembly Nominee Ballot Book

## **Synod Officer**

*(4 year term)*

## **Vice President**

### **Elysia McGill**

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Falls City, Rolling Hills Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

Throughout my entire life when I am trying to understand something better, I ask and pray that God will put me into a position where I can learn more about whatever it is I need. I feel that God is calling me to continue learning more about what we as the Nebraska Synod do to help support each other, the larger church, and the world. I don't feel as if God is done teaching me and guiding me to do more. I am encouraged by what I see all of us doing together and I know that we will only continue to grow stronger when we work together.

### **Fred Ohles**

First Lutheran Church, Lincoln, Lincoln Area Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

Until retiring several years ago I led a faith-based (United Methodist) institution of higher education for 12 years. In retirement one of my current projects is volunteer interviewer for Lutheran Family Services. During 2022 I serve as president of our congregation. With my wife, for the past half-dozen years I have also been a facilitator of a seminar for prospective college presidents, with particular focus on helping them to discern their vocations. Out of these experiences and the commitments that go with them, I believe that I am ready to carry out the responsibilities of the vice president in the Nebraska Synod. Within the broad Lutheran understanding of what it means to be called, if it is willed through the Synod Assembly I will take up this work with a sense of responsibility and joy.

### **Dennis Remington**

Salem Lutheran Church, Fremont, Fremont Area Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I have felt God's call to be a Lay Minister, sharing the Good News and being a light in the darkness to everyone I meet. Two years ago when I was in ICU I felt God pick me up from my hospital bed with his arms surrounding me and said going to be alright, and that he had more work to do in his Kingdom. I am called to be his witness in this world.

## **Synod Council**

*(6 year term unless noted)*

### **Lincoln Area Cluster, Lay Male Nominees**

#### **Fred Bredehoeft**

Luther Memorial Lutheran, Syracuse, Lincoln Area Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I am in the process of finishing my Parish Ministry Associate training and see a need to serve the ELCA of Nebraska synod and be a key part in the future growth of the Nebraska synod. This will all happen with the guidance of the Holy Spirit which has lead me to where I am today.

#### **James Yankech**

St Andrew's, Lincoln NE, Lincoln Area Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I have been a member of St Andrew's for over thirty years and was first elected to the Synod Consultation Committee in 2016. I currently serve as Council President for St Andrew's. I value the community and diversity of the ELCA. I teach leadership and organizational behavior university classes and am called to serve the ELCA with my gifts, time, and talents.

### **Northeast Cluster, Clergy Female Nominees**

#### **Rev. Sandra Braasch**

Salem Lutheran Church, Dakota City, Northeast Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I believe that I embody love for God, willingness to hear God's calling in my own life, and a passion for God's mission for God's church. I believe in working together and empowering our cooperative strength within the synod, trying new things and taking risks for the sake of the Gospel. I celebrate the many wonderful ministries happening throughout the synod and the ways in which the glory of God is being shared through mission and service. I believe we must lean further into the ways we look forward as the church - the synod - to build from our rich history, to build from our grace filled theology, and to open our hearts and minds to the richness of diversity in our communities and to the work of God today in those communities throughout the Nebraska synod. God is calling us forward, journeying together as instruments of God's amazing grace, forgiveness, and love.

## **Rev. Karen McNeill-Utecht**

St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Pender, Northeast Cluster

### **Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

There is a need for a pastor to serve in place of late council member, Gary Harris. As a called minister in Nebraska Synod and Northeast Cluster, I stepped up knowing God will support my calling if I am elected. I have never served on synod council, though I have served in elected and non-elected leadership roles in Synod, cluster, ministerial, and private sectors. After two years of seminary in the 1980's I worked as a hospital chaplain alongside my work in hospital laboratory and safety. I graduated from LTSS and have served as a pastor in the ELCA for 15 years. I have been called to mostly small-town ministry, though I interned in a large church. I have a diverse background and have lived and worked around the world. I believe that God has given me a heart to support the mission of the church and creativity to use my experience to grow into the work I am called to with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## **Pony Express Cluster, Lay Male Nominees**

### **Britt Anderson**

Zion Lutheran, Gothenburg, Pony Express Cluster

### **Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

Answer Unavailable

### **Nathan Peterson**

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bertrand NE, Pony Express Cluster

### **Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

Nate was active in youth activities while growing up at Immanuel and he attended Gatherings in New Orleans and St. Louis. He also participates in volunteer trips to Mexico and Alaska. While in the University setting, Nate earned two Master's degrees and a doctorate in Art History. He can read, write and speak in five languages including Madarin. Nate serves on the church council, the tech committee, and assists ministers during worship. Nate's youth and abilities are gifts to the church.

## Rolling Hills Cluster, Lay Female Nominees

### Sarah Effken Purcell

Grace Lutheran, Cook, Rolling Hills Cluster

#### **Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

Sometimes the Holy Spirit taps you on the shoulder and other times it's a whack on the side of the head. I think being called into mission and service as a Nebraska Synod Council member has been a whack on the side of the head! I was surprised, humbled, and honored to be asked to have my name submitted as a nominee for the council.

I was born into a Lutheran family. My great-great grandfather, Rev. Frederick Beckmann, established numerous churches in Nebraska, Iowa and the Dakotas, including the Stone Church and St. James near Johnson in southeast Nebraska. His son, my great-grandfather, Rev. William Beckmann, was the founder of Hope Lutheran in Burr, Nebraska. For almost 50 years, my ministry has focused on music. As my professional career took me to various locations in the United States, I served as the organist for churches in Cook, Holdrege, and Broken Bow, Nebraska; Hilo and Lihue, Hawaii; as well as Hilmar, California. The spectrum of churches includes ELCA, ALC, LCA, Missouri Synod, and even a stint at a Baptist Church!

As a retired Nebraska Extension Educator who focused in 4-H Youth Development, it has also been my privilege to serve as a Sunday School teacher, Sunday School Superintendent, and Luther League sponsor. Of course, I have served on the Church Council to aid in the decision-making of the church. Leadership opportunities that I enjoyed during my professional career included serving as the President of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Faculty Senate and the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Association. As I reviewed past minutes of the Nebraska Synod Council, I discovered how close the internal workings are of these organizations.

Ted Bolsinger, in his book, "Canoeing the Mountains" showcased how explorers Lewis and Clark needed to adapt. They had prepared to canoe to the Pacific Ocean, instead they found themselves in the Rocky Mountains. They were river people and suddenly needed to become mountain people. The church is like Lewis and Clark, we don't know the future, everything is different from the past. We need to retool to get over the mountains. We Lutherans know we can't do things like the past, like my great-great and great-grandfathers experienced. We need to find the courage and conviction to retool to draw in the 21st Century believers. As we select a new bishop to lead the Nebraska Synod, who undoubtedly will set a new tone for the Synod, I will be able to offer a fresh perspective to the council. I am one of God's servants, who is willing and able to join others to work to get over the mountains together.



## Seed Planters Cluster, Clergy Male Nominees

### Rev. Steven Peeler

Messiah Lutheran Church, Grand Island, Seed Planters Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

It was an honor to be nominated by a clergy colleague at the in-person cluster gatherings on Saturday, February 5 as a candidate for the Nebraska Synod Council. I have previously served one term on the Nebraska Synod Council during Bishop Maas' first term. This too is an important time in the life of the Synod as we call a new Bishop and the Synod Council helps with the transition of new leadership. As we live into the ongoing and everchanging presence of COVID, Synod Council's work will be vital to the leadership of synodical ministries; relationships across the ELCA; and the on-going ministry of mission sites throughout the Nebraska Synod. With gratitude, I look forward to the opportunity to serve the Nebraska Synod in this role if elected.

## Two Rivers Cluster, Lay Male Nominees

### Blaine Jelden

Bethany Lutheran Church, Axtell, NE, Two Rivers Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I believe we need quality people from our rural congregations to ensure all members are fairly represented at the State and National levels of the ELCA.

## Youth Representative Nominees

**(2 Year Term, 14-17 years old OR entering 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades)**

### Katya Gutiérrez

San Andrés Lutheran Church, Omaha, Nebraska, Metro East Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

Getting to learn new things

### Anna Woods

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bellevue, Metro East Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I serve on a board in my congregation and want to share a youth perspective on synod council.

# Consultation Committee

*(6 year term)*

## **Rev. Eric Spruth-Janssen**

St James Lutheran, Humboldt, Rolling Hills Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

Integral to my calling is spiritual direction and I have worked with many clergy in the past 10 years in their discernment process. This fits well with the Discipline committee in that working with folks we would prayerfully discern a path forward in difficult circumstances.

## **Steven Stroup**

Zion Lutheran, Benkelman, NE, Tumbleweed Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I have served as a council president for about 12 years at Zion. I have served on several state organization boards the last 8 years. I also have worked on all of these boards in some form of conflict resolution and management organization. I believe that all conflict resolution begins by understanding everyone's reasons and points of view. I believe in giving back to help make things better. I will be going off of the Zion church council and would like to be a part of a larger process. Thanks for your consideration.

## **Rev. Sadi Omar Vila**

Iglesia Luterana San Andrés, Omaha, NE, Metro East Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

As people of God we are called to love and serve all. As Lutherans we are called to walk together in justice and freedom. Serve the people of God is also guard and care for the sake of the community of faith.

# Committee on Discipline

*(6 year term)*

## **Kathy McAreavey**

Bethany Elkhorn, Elkhorn, Metro West Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I feel God has prepared me to serve on the Committee on Discipline by blessing me with the gifts of mediation, discernment, calmness and prayerfulness. I've had experience in applying these gifts in both church and other settings such as a school employee, on various community boards and in personal situations.

## **Alejandra Rosas**

San Andrés Iglesia Luterana, Omaha, Metro East Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I experienced and believe in the church as an instrument of God's grace to transform the world calling us to be dynamic and authentic at the time to share our gifts.

## **Kevin Tranmer**

Southwood Lutheran Church, Lincoln NE, Lincoln Area Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

My past experiences combined with work history and training compel me to work for God within our congregations to ensure justice and peace between our brother and sisters in faith.

## **Joel Woods**

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bellevue, Metro East Cluster

**Briefly describe your sense of how God is calling you into mission and service in the Nebraska Synod through the work of the position(s) selected above.**

I have felt God's call to serve on the Committee on Discipline in order to increase my engagement with Nebraska Synod activities above the congregational level. I am thankful for this opportunity to serve the Synod in this unique way that will also present interesting challenges, while allowing me to work together with other Synod members from around the state.