



2024 Nebraska Synod Assembly Nominations Biographical Reports

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



2024 Nebraska Synod Assembly Ballot

Synod Council Members

Vote for 1 from each Cluster

Corridor Cluster

- Mike Unverferth
- _____

Elkhorn Valley Cluster

- _____
- _____

Fremont Area Cluster

- Mary Magstadt
- Wendy Olson
- _____

Metro West Cluster

- Kathy McAreavey
- Ric Miller
- _____

Panhandle Cluster

- Rev. Brenda Pfeifly
- _____

Prairie Cluster

- Irv Schleufer
- _____

Youth

- Judson Gregory
- Isaac Manahan
- Caleb Ruch
- _____

Consultation Committee

Lay Nominees-

Vote for 3:

- Jean Granahan
- Ron Gunderson
- Ian Hartfield
- Christine Lund
- _____

Rostered Nominees-

Vote for 3:

- Rev. Kris Bohac
- Rev. John Gosswein
- Rev. Erin Heidelberger
- Rev. Chad Rademacher
- _____

Committee on Discipline

Rostered Nominees-

Vote for 4:

- Rev. Erin Heidelberger
- Rev. Erick Hill
- Rev. Kat Montira
- Rev. Chad Rademacher
- Rev. Otto Schultz
- Rev. Patrick Sipes
- _____

ELCA Church Council

Lay Male- Vote for 2

- Jeff Akerson
- Jon Fredricks
- Matt Schur
- _____

Churchwide Assembly Voting Members

Lay- Vote for 10

- Gwen Edwards
- Adam Frerichs
- Ian Hartfield
- Nancy Hinrichs
- Rhonda Obert
- Mary Magstadt
- Carol Meyer
- Ric Miller
- Nathan Peterson
- Mike Unverferth
- Laurel Wiegand
- _____

Rostered- Vote for 7

- Rev. Marcia Dorn
- Rev. John Gosswein
- Rev. Joanna Kathol
- Rev. Lori Kitzing
- Rev. Paula Lawhead
- Rev. Kat Montira
- Rev. Brenda Pfeifly
- Rev. Miles Ruch
- Rev. Allison Siburg
- Dn. Timothy Siburg
- Rev. Eric Spruth-Jannsen
- Rev. Linda Walz
- _____

Youth/Young Adults-

Vote for 2

- Kristin Bartlett
- Dex Dexter
- _____

*This is a sample ballot ONLY. Nominations will be accepted from the floor.

2024 Synod Assembly Nominee Ballot Book

Jeff Akerson- 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.

As a lifelong member of the Lutheran community and a dedicated servant of Christ, I am honored and excited to be considered for the ballot for the Churchwide Council. Called to church leadership over 25 years ago and actively involved in our church at both local and synodical levels, I bring experience, passion, and commitment to this position. Throughout my journey within the ELCA, I have served in various capacities, including church council, Sunday School and men's group leader, worship leader, active participant on boards and committees, leadership of long-range planning teams, and conductor of church council retreats across the Nebraska Synod. These experiences have deepened my understanding of the diverse needs and aspirations of our congregations and have inspired me to advocate for unity, justice, and compassion within our denomination. With God's grace and guidance, I am confident that together we can continue to proclaim the Gospel, nurture discipleship, and bear witness to God's redeeming love in the world.

Kristen Bartlett- American Lutheran Church, 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.

I believe it the duty of those who follow the Word of God to live and lead with love and grace of the Jesus Christ we believe died for us. I have been a member of the ELCA my entire life and have found that God has led me to places I never planned, or sometimes wanted to be. I have been a Young Adult in Global Mission (17-18) and volunteered at the Summer Missionary Conference while I lived in Chicago and attended the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago. I have seen many facets of the ELCA since growing up at ALC Gothenburg and now work the Sunrise Lutheran Parish of Cozad and Eustis. No matter how hard I tried to ignore it, I know that I have been called to serve others in the Nebraska Synod as someone who has lived here and then left and returned with experience and knowledge to share with family and friends and others about the world God has given us.

Rev. Kris Bohac- Bethlehem/Zion Lutheran Church, Davey/Ithaca, Corridor 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 good memories from my own candidacy period and the help the committee offered. I want to give back.

Dex Dexter- American 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.

I feel God in every aspect of my life, whether it be large or small. I see God in my day-to-day life, from the food that nurtures my body, to the smile on a friend's face when we spend time together, to the congregation that loves me and I call my own. As someone with a degree in the natural resources field, I especially see God in his creation whenever I go out to hike, or collect data for research, or even still when I am in the lab analyzing samples. I break things down scientifically to better understand His design.

I believe that God has gifted me with the ability to express myself through art and music. I hear Him in the songs I sing with the choir and play with the bells. I feel Him with me when I paint and draw, and He inspires me to make beautiful things.

I believe that I can add to understanding those of us who are Christian and also identify with the LGBTQ+ community, like myself. I would like to spread God's love and acceptance of all people. I want people to love their neighbors even when they have differences. I believe that God's love knows no bounds, and that everyone should feel accepted in His house.

Rev. Marcia Dorn- Bethany Lutheran Church, Axtell, 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.

As a member of the Nebraska Synod and the ELCA I feel it is important to keep up with what is happening or perhaps not happening. My interest lies in the congregation as well the Synod and Churchwide and feel if an opportunity to experience any part of these presents itself it should be taken advantage of. To really see and witness how we work as the ELCA is an incredible experience. I was blessed to attend the Churchwide assembly as a voting member in 2012 and was truly moved by the assembly. It seems important to not only attend and be a part of such a spirit driven event but to also bring the message back to others so they may become excited and may wish the same for themselves!

Gwen Edwards- Lord of Love Lutheran Church, Omaha, 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.

God is calling me to serve the Church beyond my congregation and synod. Serving as a Churchwide voting member is a way to bring my experience to the larger Church and the Nebraska Synod. Serving God and the Church in this role is a way to share His love and faith with others and continuing moving forward in doing His work in all aspects of the Church. I believe I can faithfully serve the Church and the Nebraska Synod in this role.

Jon Fredricks- St. Michael Lutheran Church, Omaha, 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 am blessed to serve as a conduit between and among our Nebraska Lutheran Campus Ministries and the congregations of the Nebraska Synod. In this call, I connect, engage, invite, encourage, support, and share the story of God's love through Jesus Christ in the world we share. Having served in and around campus ministry, congregational ministry, and synodical ministry for more than two decades, my connections, and commitment to Christ's church is steadfast. My efforts, prayers and work are always in support of our collective mission-inviting people to Christ.

Adam Frerichs - Immanuel Lutheran Church Weyerts, Lodgepole, Panhandle 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 currently in the PMA program. I have attended Nebraska Synod Assembly and would like the opportunity to attend Churchwide Assembly as a voting member.

Rev. John Gosswein- First Lutheran Church, Kearney, 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.

35 years of pastoral ministry in Nebraska Synod. I have had opportunity to serve in parish, ministry with individuals in Mosaic, among deaf, frequently at camp (NLOM), with Campus Lutheran in Kearney, and on several Synodical committees. The Spirit continues to encourage us to see creative ways of expanding established mission and ministry to reach out to the world in exciting new paths.

Jean Granahan- 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 always been active in my church life. I am able to stay calm in volatile situations because being a former teacher, I had to remain calm in difficult situations with students.

Judson Gregory- 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 am excited to work for the whole church, not just my congregation. I feel like some gifts that I show is hard work, determination, looking at the wellbeing of the whole church, and being a problem solver.

Ron Gunderson- St. Paul's 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.

I believe God calls all of us to use the gifts given to us for the benefit of the Church. This includes the local congregation, Nebraska Synod and the Churchwide expression. Over the years, I have been active in the work and mission of the Nebraska Synod. I have served on the Candidacy Committee, Planning Committee and Resolutions, Reference and Counsel committees. God has gifted me with the ability to listen to different points of view and help reconcile those differences. Being newly retired, I now have more time to serve the Church in new ways.

Ian Hartfield- Sheridan 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.

I have served in youth ministries for nearly 20 years in larger ministry settings. I have also served on several synodical and serving arm committees and leadership teams. I also serve as the Synod archivist. I care deeply about God's people and how we express our shared faith through synod ministries.

Rev. Erin Heidelberger- 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.

I have served in ordained ministry for nine years and have served in the Nebraska synod for close to three years. I believe that an aspect of my call to ministry is also a call to serve the synod. As a rostered leader, I am also called to work for the health and well-being of fellow ministers and congregations. Serving on either the Consultation Committee and/or Committee on Discipline is ultimately about that: working for the health of ministers and congregations. I am able to handle difficult issues and circumstances with level-headedness, keep confidences, be open to understanding different perspectives and viewpoints, and am creative and supportive.

Rev. Erick Hill- Messiah Lutheran Church, Ralston, 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 believe I will bring a perspective to the role of the discipline committee that may challenge convention and ask critical questions. As an organizational psychologist and a trained mediator I believe I will bring skills, experiences, and knowledge to this group.. I have experience in organizational settings working directly with leaders, physicians, and organizational staff to develop effective communication, teamwork, and problem solving. I have assisted leaders and physicians to de-escalate conflict, address anger issues, and promote well-being. I have worked in a variety of arenas where confidentiality is essential. I believe I would be a valued member of this committee.

Nancy Hinrichs- St. John Lutheran Church, Ohioa, Prairie 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 a huge supporter of the ELCA. As a PMA student I am gaining confidence and knowledge supporting my faith and reason for being ELCA. As a high school teacher, teaching speech and being a speech coach and judge for over 30 years, I am highly organized, have a great attention to detail and teaching Language Arts listening skills and patience.

Rev. Joanna Kathol- St. Paul's 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.

I grew up in the NE Synod and have been actively involved in the Church and Synod for much of my life. In high school I served as the youth representative on the Synod Council from 2012-2014. I recently graduated from an ELCA seminary and am serving my first congregation as a full-time pastor. As a young pastor beginning ministry, I believe I have a fresh perspective, passion and investment in the church as we strive to be the Body of Christ in a relevant and meaningful way in the midst of an ever changing world.

Rev. Lori Kitzing- Bethany Lutheran Church, Ruskin, Prairie 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.

Having served the ELCA in many ways: from serving as a Pastor in rural Nebraska, to being a volunteer at the National Youth Gathering (six times), to serving on Synod Council. Having served the church at local, synodical, and national levels I have a deep appreciation for the diversity of the expressions of the church. I would be honored to serve the Nebraska Synod by participating in the next Churchwide Assembly and representing the unique voice of this state.

Rev. Paula Lawhead- 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 am good at listening and hearing points from various views and seeing paths forward. I am a strong leader and can inspire vision.

Ron Lofgren- St. John's Lutheran Church, Norfolk, Elkhorn Valley 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 always felt God's call to use my gifts in service to the church, using my music to the Glory of God. Throughout my teaching career I either sang in or led church choirs. After retiring from teaching, I was called to be a PMA, a position that has brought great joy.

Christine Lund- St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, Omaha, 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.

As a member of Micah 6:8 and a lifelong Lutheran, I understand the tensions and the possibilities that communities of faith can become engaged in. I believe I could be a meaningful member of a committee that would focus on Listening and encouraging discernment and wisdom with compassion for the lived experiences of the people involved in conflict.

Mary Magstadt- 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 been called to be on the church council in three congregations. In two I was the president. I get along well with others and my former occupation helped me develop leadership qualities. I am especially interested in helping struggling congregations to continue their mission and to change how they are operating.

Isaac Manahan- 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 feel called to serve to help my peers and to be a good representative of the youth. My gifts are that I think of things in an abstract way, not taking things too literally, and will ask questions.

Kathy McAreavey- Bethany Lutheran Church, 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.

In acknowledging the Holy Spirit's leading to be open to Synod Council candidacy, I've learned that my spiritual gifts of compassion, spiritual care and discernment, along with experience as a Stephen Minister, Faith Leader, Rooted study graduate, Teammates mentor and friend to those with developmental differences has prepared me to share and contribute to how the church can serve the "least of these". The experience God has given me of both a small rural Nebraska congregation and a large metro Omaha congregation, which offers me perspective into the congregational experiences in both settings.

Carol Meyer- Southwood 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.

As a theologically strong, faith-filled believer in the work of the church I have seen the big picture & the goods of the church. As a pastor's wife living & participating in many churches in 8 states, I feel it's important to support & advocate. My background in worship & music is also strong.

Ric Miller- Morning Star Lutheran Church, Omaha, 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 believe I am called to provide pastoral care for people of all ages and backgrounds, especially the retired community. I will represent and care for all Nebraska Lutherans. Born/raised on a farm East of Sidney; confirmed at Gloria Dei in Lodgepole; 1980 grad of Midland Lutheran College; married at Luther Memorial Omaha; 33 yr. member of Morning Star: PMA Certified since October 10, 2021. A servant of Christ my entire life, worked for Project Hope, Lutheran Metro Ministries, Mosaic, NeLCM & more.

Rev. Kat Montira- Calvary Lutheran Church, Scottsbluff, Panhandle 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 interested in the call of the church. I was voted in to go to the last Assembly. but once I got to Columbus came down with Covid. I missed the whole week. I would like the opportunity to go again, and be a part of the historic acts that keep God's church alive here. I feel called to represent the people of Nebraska at this Assembly. As a minister of small and rural churches, I can bring a voice to the Assembly representing some of our most overlooked congregations. The future of our church always hangs in the balance, and I feel God calling me to be a part of it. Thank you for your consideration. God's blessings to you!

Rhonda Obert- Grace Lutheran Church, Wahoo, Corridor 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 clearly heard God calling me to serve others with talents He has given me and possess a strong belief in "God's Work Our Hands" I have been a very active member of Grace. Currently I am serving as organist (over 36 years) other groups or committees. Each year I lead our congregation in collecting items for school and health care kits for LWR. I am a trained/certified team leader for Thrivent Builds with Habitat for Humanity and have been on over 15 mission. Trips and have a master's degree in business administration.

Wendy Olson- First 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.

As a recent retiree my career required coordinating people and events. I believe that God has given me a gift to listen intentionally to organize events and activities, and to negotiate with others to work together effectively.

Nathan Peterson- Immanuel Lutheran Church, Bertrand, 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.

God calls me to use my skills rather than conceal them. I pray that the synod can use my skills to further the ministry.

Rev. Brenda Pfeifly- Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Sidney, Panhandle 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 34 years of experience as a Pastor primarily in Nebraska Synod. I attended the Churchwide Assembly in 2011. I would bring my years of church council experience to the work of Synod Council. I possess good pastoral and organizational skills to various areas of ministry.

Rev. Chad Rademacher- Our Savior Lutheran Church, Wayne, 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 feel called to continue a 2nd term on the nominating committee. Additionally, I have experience with conflict situations where my gifts may serve useful should the need arise.

Caleb Ruch- Sheridan 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.

I have been very involved in the church my entire life. I attend Youth Group weekly and teach Sunday School classes as well as lead on our Youth Praise Team for Sunday morning Sunday School and Wednesday worship Praise Team. I want to give the youth of the Nebraska Synod a greater voice and I feel that I can do that by serving on Synod Council. As a leader in school sports and music ensembles as well as church activities I feel led to continue developing my leadership skills on the Synod Council.

Irvin Schleufer- Salem Lutheran Church, Superior, Prairie 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.

PMA, longtime Lutheran church member. Had various church council offices, retired.

Rev. Otto Schultz- Our Savior's 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.

My experience is working with people who have behavioral health issues including clergy. These issues are often related to discipline problems of clergy.

Matt Schur- Southwood 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.

I've had a wide range of experiences within the Nebraska Synod which have helped me understand how the ELCA functions as an entity. I served at the Lutheran Center at UNL in a full-time role as a lay minister 2003-06. In 2006 I was part of a team that introduced the ELW to the Nebraska Synod. I've served on staff in varying roles for 3 congregations, and in 2015 graduated from Luther Seminary with an MA. I currently serve the Lutheran Center at UNL as part-time music director and provide pulpit supply across the synod 13-15 weekends per year. I was also recently asked to be part of the layperson cohort for Luther Seminary's Compelling Preaching Initiative and will be the primary speaker at the Western North Dakota Synod's 2024 Youth Assembly this fall.

Rev. Allison Siburg- Salem Lutheran Church, Fontanelle, 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.

Rev. Allison Siburg is passionate about serving Jesus thru her church, congregationally, synodically and thru the ELCA's churchwide experience. Her diverse background positions her well to lead her pastoral voice in the context of the 2025's churchwide assembly.

Dn. Timothy Siburg- Salem Lutheran Church, Fontanelle, 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.

It is my joy to serve on Synod staff and as a bridge between ELCA churchwide and the whole synod. With gifts of experience related to vision, stewardship organizational change, and reference counsel experience, serving as a voting member for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly would be a gift and honor given all the changes and new directions to be considered.

Rev. Patrick Sipes- First Lutheran Church, North Platte, 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.

When serving on the Consultation Committee in the Upper Susquehanna Synod in central Pennsylvania, I found out the importance of these "Committees that never meet." when we did meet. Having many listening ears and the wisdom of a group makes for better decisions. Though I pray the Committee on Discipline does not meet, I stand ready to listen to testimony, weigh evidence that is presented, and vote on disciplinary action in keeping with Church's constitutions.

Rev. Eric Spruth-Janssen- St. James Lutheran Church, Humbolt, 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.

As a rural pastor and chaplain for Mosaic, I would bring an important voice to the church.

Mike Unverferth- Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Davey, Corridor 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 previously served the Nebraska Synod with two terms on the Candidacy Committee. I have also served multiple terms on my local congregation Council, and currently serve as treasurer. I have attended many Synod Assemblies and feel a call to participate in decisions influencing the wider Church. I have experience in leadership through the operation of my own business, as well as within my congregation and on other community boards. I am also working toward certification as a PMA and so am gaining theological knowledge through the coursework.

Rev. Linda Walz- Immanuel Communities-Trinity Campus, Papillion, 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 strongly that the rostered leadership of the ELCA will be critical in moving us into an uncertain future. I would love to mentor/encourage those taking on this challenge.

Laurel Wiegand- Christ the King 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.

God has called to me since I was a child to help others. Since living in Nebraska, I have found God's call within the Lutheran churches. They are an extension of family, helping others in times of need and celebrating in times of joy. The call is to see people in need of love and help, no judging. Show Christ's love in what we do for others.