

Southeastern Minnesota Synod Bishop Profile

The Election and Call of the Bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod May 30-31, 2025

The Office and Ministry of the Bishop

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America seeks the Holy Spirit's guidance in electing and calling a bishop for the Southeastern Minnesota Synod. The role of the bishop is defined theologically in the Lutheran Confessions and given institutional shape in the constitution of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, Chapter 8. (Various citations from the constitution are referenced below. In addition, each nominee will be required to have a background check.)

The responsibilities listed in the synod's constitution are quite extensive and represent the minimum requirements for the bishop's call. We also want to identify the specific gifts, competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and motivations), and experiences that might best serve the Southeastern Minnesota Synod for the next six years.

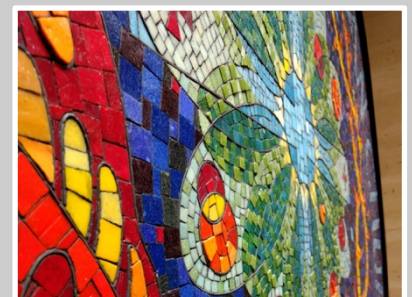
There will be a time in the election process at assembly when nominees will have the opportunity to answer questions from the voting members. The following outline summarizes some of the key aspects of the bishop's role:

- 1. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church (S8.12.a.).** *How does the bishop foster dialogue and lead conversation about what it means to be Christian (and Lutheran) in this time and place, in relation to the witness of the history and theology of the church's tradition?*
- 2. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations (S8.12.b.).** *Timothy Wengert in *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops*, pp. 65, 75, 100, points out that the Confessions consider the ministry of the bishop to be equivalent to that of a "head pastor" in a city or town. How might the bishop serve as "chief pastor" of Word and Sacrament for the synod?*
- 3. Provide pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ordained ministers, and its other rostered leaders (S8.12.b.).** *Pastoral care involves both support and admonition (law and gospel). How does the bishop's role include practicing mercy and forgiveness and yet also providing for good order in consideration for the health of the whole church?*
- 4. Ordain, commission, and consecrate approved candidates for various ministries (or provide for these actions in accordance with the constitution), attest letters of call, and install ordained and other rostered leaders (S8.12.c.-f.).** *What are the most helpful characteristics of a bishop's work with the call process? How does the bishop build up and encourage the varied ministries across the synod?*
- 5. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church (S8.12.g.).** *This may include the ability to lead planning for the overall mission of the synod, to publicly interpret this mission both internally and externally, and to help gather the necessary resources for our mission as a synod. How might the bishop help elicit new visions for mission in the midst of a changing culture?*



“As the Southeastern Minnesota Synod prepares to elect its next bishop in May, 2025, the Committee for the Election of a Bishop offers this profile overview to inform both conversation and discernment about the future focus, leadership competencies, and responsibilities within this synod. The fundamental constitutional requirements and expectations for the Office of the Bishop are listed for your reference. We give thanks for your active participation and engagement in this process.”

– Dr. Joyce A. Thompsen
Chair, Committee for the
Election of the Bishop



6. **Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church** (S.8.12.h.). *The ELCA has formal relationships with the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, and United Church of Christ churches. Additional important ecumenical relationships are with the Minnesota Council of Churches. What should the bishop's priorities be in fostering these connections?*
7. **Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of ordained ministers, other rostered leaders, and congregations of this synod** (S.8.12.h.2.). *What are the personal gifts and skills of delegation needed to carry out this responsibility?*
8. **Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches** (S.8.12.h.5.). *The bishop relates to various ministries including campus ministry, social service ministries and agencies, outdoor ministries, global missions, etc. Approximately four to eight weeks of the bishop's time each year are involved in working directly with the ELCA and its regions (more time in years with a churchwide assembly). The bishop covenants with other bishops and church leaders to foster collegial and accountable relationships. How might a new bishop set priorities for managing the demands of the role?*
9. **Oversee and administer the work of this synod** (S.8.12.i.). *The office of bishop involves many administrative duties, including exercising appropriate legal authority; preparing for synod assemblies and the synod council; acting in conformity with the constitution; supervising other synod officers and synod staff; appointing and serving on committees; and maintaining rosters. The position involves a great deal of collaboration, supervision, and leadership. How can synod ministers, the synod council, and the administrative staff best collaborate in accomplishing the synod's work?*

Pre-Assembly Process

All congregations are invited to hold critical conversations about the state of our church communities across the synod, the emergence of the most likely and compelling opportunities in which the synod can lead us forward for positive impact, and the specific leadership competencies that can most effectively shape our work. Congregations are then encouraged to identify and nominate any ELCA rostered pastor who exemplifies the qualities and experiences that are considered most important for the synod's next bishop. This work can be completed at congregational annual meetings or at special meetings. Nominations must be submitted by January 30, 2025, to Dr. Joyce A. Thompsen, 413 – 13th Avenue NE, Waseca, MN 56093.

During the five Conference Assembly gatherings on February 16, 2025, all nominations with biographical data received by January 30 will be received and voted upon. Up to three names will be advanced to the Committee for the Election of a Bishop for further consideration. The Committee will then select up to nine candidates, prepare detailed candidate profiles, and arrange for discernment forums throughout the synod in May, prior to the Synod Assembly and ecclesiastical election for the bishop in Mankato on May 30-31.

Committee for the Election of a Bishop

Southeastern Minnesota Synod ELCA
semnsynod.org/BishopElection



The Bishop's Term of Office

Southeastern Minnesota Synod
Constitution S8.51.01.a

The bishop of this synod shall be elected to a term of six years and may be reelected once (a maximum of twelve years.)

The Election of a Bishop

Southeastern Minnesota Synod
Constitution S9.04

The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the four persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the third ballot, and 60 percent of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot.

The Ecclesiastical Ballot

- On the first ballot the name of any eligible individual (on the ELCA clergy roster) is submitted by each voting member.
- The possibility of election exists on any ballot by achieving the required number of votes cast by voting members of the assembly applicable to a particular ballot.
- Spoken floor nominations are precluded.
- The first ballot is the nominating ballot if no election occurs on the first ballot.