



July 28 – August 2
PHOENIX, ARIZONA



Possible Nominees Pre-Identified for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA

In February and March 2025, voting members were invited to pre-identify up to three individuals whom they believed could be possible nominees for presiding bishop of the ELCA. The following individuals were identified and chose to submit paperwork to be publicly identified for this process. In completing the biographical form, respondents were asked to limit their response to each prompt to 200 words.

The Rev. Amy Current
The Rev. Emily Ebert
The Rev. Erik Gronberg
The Rev. Kevin Jones
The Rev. Craig Schweitzer
The Rev. Angela Shannon
The Rev. Kevin Strickland

Please note this is not a nomination process. This is a tool for voting members to have more information in advance of the 2025 Churchwide Assembly. Voting members are welcome to download or print this information in advance of the assembly. After the assembly passes the “Rules of Organization and Procedure” for the 2025 Churchwide Assembly on Monday, July 28, this document with the list of names will be removed from ELCA.org and the ELCA Churchwide Assembly Guide. The traditional ecclesiastical ballot will then be used for the presiding bishop election. The above named persons may or may not be nominated on the first ballot of the process; additional persons may be nominated on the first ballot. The Spirit will be present. This process allows preparation while also being open to how the Spirit may move.

**Biographical Information for Possible Nominee
for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

Bishop Amy Current

Current Position: Bishop, Southeastern Iowa Synod

Congregation of Membership: St John Lutheran Church, St Donatus, Iowa

Date and Year of Ordination: 1997-07-13

Previous Positions:

Vice President of Admissions and Student Services, Wartburg Theological Seminary (January 2011–October 2020)
Director for Financial Aid and Stewardship Formation, Wartburg Theological Seminary (August 2007–December 2010)

Interim Director for Center for Youth Ministry, Wartburg Theological Seminary (July 2006–July 2007)

Pastor, Maple Sheyenne Lutheran Church, Harwood, ND (October 2003–June 2006)

On Leave from Call (Parenting) (September 2001–October 2003)

Pastor, Golden Ridge Lutheran Church, Fargo, ND, and Congregational Lutheran United Church, Gardner, ND (July 1997–August 2001)

Intern, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Seattle WA (August 1995–July 1996)

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

MDIV, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA (1993–1997)

BA, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN (1989–1993)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Anglican Lutheran International Commission on Unity and Mission, Anglican Communion and Lutheran World Federation,

Archdiocesan Review Board, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Dubuque

Executive Committee, Conference of Bishops, ELCA

Leadership Committee, Conference of Bishops, ELCA

Grand View University, Des Moines, IA

Lutheran Services in Iowa, Des Moines, IA

Wartburg College, Waverly, IA

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Unity Point Health, Des Moines, IA (2020-2024)

Sunday School Treasurer, St John, St Donatus, IA

Bryant Elementary School Site Council, Dubuque, IA

Dubuque Montessori School Board, Dubuque, IA

Hunger and Justice Committee, Eastern North Dakota Synod

Rape and Abuse Crisis Center, Fargo, ND

Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as the next presiding bishop.

I love serving as the Bishop of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, with its joys and challenges both and I continue to feel called. And, in the last few months, I have received encouragement from colleagues and friends to allow my name to be considered in this call process. Frankly, I have resisted, prayed, ignored, pondered, engaged in conversation with my spouse, children, colleagues, read scripture, invited feedback from the encouragers, read the Small Catechism, invited prayer from others, revisited the ELCA Constitution, fought a good amount of imposter syndrome and fear, engaged my curiosity, and now feel compelled to practice what I preach which is to listen, pray, pay attention, open your heart, get out of your own way, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead. So, with humility, I do believe that my combination of relational, administrative, theological and leadership gifts lend well to the role of bishop and, if called, to the role of presiding bishop.

What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of presiding bishop?

I love being a pastor in God's church. I am grateful for God's gift of faith, and I am grounded in my identity as a child of God at the font, the table and in the pulpit, and as a human. My daily prayer is God guide me to be faithful to you and forgive me when I am not. As a leader, I am agile, collaborative, decisive, discerning, encouraging, energetic, forthright, inquisitive, joyful, kind, levelheaded, and trustworthy. I ask a lot of questions for clarity, discernment, and most often to foster transparency. I thrive in challenging situations with courage and kindness and do not shy away from difficult decisions or conversations. As for spiritual gifts, in 1996, an inventory pegged me as an evangelist. I didn't know what to make of it then. Here's the thing, It's true! God has given me the gift of evangelism to share the Good News of God through Jesus Christ as a child of God to listen and then to share God's love with a spirit of deep joy. My greatest joy is to accompany people and witness as they meet and fall in love with the living God.

What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities of this church in the next six years, and how would you approach them?

We, members of the ELCA, are called to witness to the Triune God in these highly polarized and uncertain times. Centered in prayer and scripture, our principal challenge and opportunity will be to remain faithful as we • preach, teach, witness to and embody the Good News of God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit, • boldly share the distinctive and lifegiving Lutheran theological witness which centers on the Triune God's grace, love, mercy, forgiveness, and life, • thoroughly analyze and carefully steward the generous and shifting resources—financial and human—shared with the ELCA Churchwide Organization by individuals, congregations, organizations, and synods and tend to the difficult and crucial work of discerning what we need to end, reimagine, or begin, • cultivate, nurture, and encourage leadership and faith formation throughout our church that meets our diverse contexts and communities across our denomination, • build trustworthy relationships across our denomination and with partners through transparent and proactive communication grounded in the Gospel, and • engage crucial adaptive challenges that include taking seriously the changing landscape and demographics of our church; discerning our shared purpose, structure, and governance; and deepening our Christ-centered commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Here are questions that I believe lead us forward: • How is God making all things new now? • How will we realign to center on the Gospel mission and equip the living saints for mission? • How does whole church partner to share the Good News?

Describe how your current and past board and committee membership experiences or previous congregation, synod, churchwide, or community-related activities have significantly impacted you and informed your vision for serving as this church's next presiding bishop.

I have had the incredible gift of serving our church as a parish pastor, as a seminary vice president, and as a synod bishop. I have served in rural, small town, urban, and specialized ministries. Through it all, I have learned from and been shaped by incredible people and communities. I understand myself to be an agile relational leader. I am known for asking "why" to inform, discern, sometimes to disrupt the status quo, and most often to build collective ownership through transparency. I am not afraid to make difficult decisions, change my mind, ask for help, or say no. I believe that if I mess up, then I apologize, learn, and do better. I believe that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. I believe that the Great Commission is still VERY relevant today. I believe in the gift of the body of Christ and the gifts we share. I am wildly grateful. I believe that Jesus meets us in our hope and fear, saying, "Peace be with you," and "Today, you will be with me in paradise." I am grateful to those who have encouraged me to prayerfully consider my call to ministry along the way and humbly pray for the Spirit to guide, to form, and to lead whoever is called to be the next presiding bishop of the ELCA.

**Biographical Information for Possible Nominee
for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

Pastor Emily Ebert

Current Position: Pastor

Congregation of Membership: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Thousand Oaks

Date and Year of Ordination: 2016-08-27

Previous Positions:

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church—Woodbridge, VA, Associate Pastor, June 2019–July 2021

Lutheran Parish of the Tonawandas (Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and St. Mark Lutheran Church)—
Buffalo/Tonawanda, NY, Solo Pastor, and Zion Lutheran Church—Clarence Center, NY, Interim Pastor, August
2016–May 2019

Zion Lutheran Church—San Antonio, TX, Pastoral Intern, August 2014–August 2015

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

Trinity Lutheran Seminary—Columbus, OH, Master of Divinity, August 2013–May 2016

Fuller Theological Seminary—Pasadena, CA, Master of Divinity, Sept 2012–June 2013 (transferred to TLS)

The Ohio State University—Columbus, CA, Bachelor of Fine Arts: Photography, Sept. 2007–June 2011

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Friends of Fieldworkers Scholarship Review Team

Women's Interfaith Network

Conejo Valley Interfaith Network

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Lutheran Charities of Western New York

RIC Team, student run at Trinity Lutheran Seminary

Community Organizing (concerning fair wages for workers in San Antonio, TX)

Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as the next presiding bishop.

Knowing how much such a position would affect our lives, I first shared it with my husband, and we sat with the idea, prayed, talked, and listened for a couple of weeks before I even filled out this form. I thought about the issues I care about, why I continue to choose to be a part of this denomination, the concerns people like my grandfather fought for as the ELCA was formed, and the concerns I have heard raised amongst friends, colleagues, and other communities of which I am a part. I still have no idea who put my name in, but after reflecting on my own, with my husband, and with a few colleagues and friends who know my heart, it became clear that the Spirit is moving me towards something. I also feel passionate about honoring the person who submitted my name. He/She/They did it for a reason. I don't know the specifics, but the Spirit continues to nudge and remind me that this person feels that as a person in a position of leadership, I can represent their voice and the voices of many others.

What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of presiding bishop?

I come with the broad perspective of having grown up in Ohio and living all across the country (NC, TX, NY, VA, and CA). Being a part of each community I've witnessed their joys, struggles, and values, which has helped me assess how to build shared wisdom, name truths, and vision for the future. These varying experiences have broadened my capacity for helping others embrace diversity in community. Each place has taken a different type of intentional work to address issues like homophobia, transphobia, and racism. As an artist, I carry the gift of creative thinking, which transfers into my work as a leader. I'm comfortable taking a concept and turning it every-which-way to find what could be life-giving. On a strictly practical side, I have used my creative skills to build websites and streamline systems. I embrace learning new skills and finding ways to simplify structures so that there is more time for dreaming and creative thinking. As a leader of an organization, I do not shy away from conflict or debate, and I believe in

leading with integrity. I value accountability, reconciliation, restoration, surrounding oneself with the wisdom of others, and speaking truth even when it is difficult.

What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities of this church in the next six years, and how would you approach them?

I see our collective voice as a gift and opportunity, expressing goals toward inclusivity, justice, respect for different spiritual expressions, advocacy opportunities, and community organizing. We have an important message to share—that we will work toward all that is life-giving, be a bold voice and raise holy trouble. With such potential, we have to take care of what is going on within our institution. I have hope in and respect the diligent work of the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church in recognizing harm and assessing next steps. Accountability opens up cracks in institutions and I'd like to face it head on with ownership, grace, and tangible goals towards restoration. Another challenge we face is in our theological accessibility and renewal. An imaginative and critical curiosity of our theology could help us serve communities in a more holistic manner now and into the future. An entrypoint is in how we value campus ministries and similar spaces as they can provide spiritual care, freedom of expression, and unique levels of relationality. Our congregations have the opportunity to listen to these voices and grow with them theologically and in spiritual practice.

Describe how your current and past board and committee membership experiences or previous congregation, synod, churchwide, or community-related activities have significantly impacted you and informed your vision for serving as this church's next presiding bishop.

I believe in being embedded in the community by facilitating connections between the people I serve and the surrounding communities, using my voice to advocate, supporting local organizations, showing up at school board and city council meetings, etc. Over the years I have learned to listen more deeply, to enter into a space with curiosity, and to balance when to speak versus when to listen. I continue to learn how to set aside certain biases and expectations I bring to the table based on my identity. Basically, I check myself. I would expect the same and continued growth in the role as bishop. Working with children, youth, families, and young adults in and outside the church keeps me connected to the shifts in generational needs and concerns. I often reflect with teachers and parents as we navigate spirituality and faith formation for the future. I don't have space to share my whole story, but I've seen and felt the potential for trauma and the many roadblocks we put up to faithful leadership in the church and in our communities. Listening and learning from these stories would be efficacious to the life of the church and would influence how I lead.

**Biographical Information for Possible Nominee
for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

Bishop Erik Gronberg

Current Position: Bishop, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod

Congregation of Membership: Trinity Lutheran-Fort Worth, TX

Date and Year of Ordination: 2005-08-28

Previous Positions:

Lead Pastor-Dr. Martin Luther Church-Oconomowoc, WI, 2005–2010

Lead Pastor-Trinity Lutheran Church-Fort Worth, TX, 2010–2016

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

PhD 2017, Dallas Baptist University, Dissertation: “Adaptive Leadership in Crisis: John Tietjen, Concordia Seminary, and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Crisis of 1969–1975”

MDiv 2005, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

A.B. 1999, Harvard University

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Wartburg Seminary Board, Finance and Operations Committee: 2023–Present

Lutheran Men in Mission Board: 2018–Present

Westcliff Elementary (Fort Worth Independent School District) PTA Board: 2013–Present

Journal of Lutheran Ethics Advisory Board: 2017–Present

Conference of Bishops Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee: 2016–Present

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Lake Area Free Clinic Board, Oconomowoc, WI: 2005–2010

Lutheran Deaconess Association Governance Committee: 2012–2015

WestAid Food Ministry (Fort Worth): 2011–2015

Greater Milwaukee Synod Campus Ministry Board: 2005–2009

Briarwood Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Board: 2010–2022

Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as the next presiding bishop.

Discerning a call to the office of presiding bishop is a humbling and decidedly prayerful process. Over the last year several respected colleagues, members of congregations, and others in our church have encouraged me to consider this possibility. It is out of respect for them, love for our church, and a commitment to being open to God’s call that I agreed to submit my name. This is the external call that invites one to consider a new role. Currently I am still discerning if I have the internal call to this office. But out of respect for those who have asked me I am submitting myself for consideration of the assembly who represents the church.

What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of presiding bishop?

In practice and study Adaptive/Learning leadership, grounded in our Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel, is central to my work. This is the focus I would bring to this office. The Law tells the truth, not flinching from reality. As pastor and bishop I have been called hold up the law to failing institutions. Doing the hard work of telling volunteers that, while appreciated, their work is not helping the congregation to grow. To refuse to prop up a camp that is financially unsustainable. Hard words to faithful people based in honesty and a recognition we must adapt. The Law then leads us to recognize our need for the Gospel. The good news God is faithful and we can adaptively learn what is next. Individuals and institutions frustrated and stymied once released find new opportunities. Property assets reallocated to provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund ministry, send youth to camp and gatherings, support sabbaticals, invest in AI exploration, fund seminary scholarships. The presiding bishop should always ask

how their work impacts and empowers local congregations and leaders to learn and adapt. Trusting the presence of the Holy Spirit and the promise of God's future.

What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities of this church in the next six years, and how would you approach them?

In January 2025 I wrote an essay as part of a Region 4 project regarding what skills and commitments the next presiding bishop would need. That is available at <https://www.ntnl.org/january-2025-the-next-presiding-bishop-of-the-elca/>. At its core our central challenge is also our greatest opportunity. How can the ELCA Churchwide structure be relevant, helpful, and seen as an ally by the local congregation. Congregations and rostered ministers should be central in every decision made. Without congregations there is no need for synods, bishops, or churchwide. The ELCA has been in decline for 30 years. This cannot be reversed without a compelling vision being cast for a Lutheran community committed to the confessions, inclusion of those historically marginalized, service to the poor, and most importantly preaching the free gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. The presiding bishop must be bishop/pastor to the entire church, recognizing our diversity comes in many ways. To do this they must address the reality of racism, sexism, and nationalism and the toxic ways this sin hobbles our efforts in evangelism. The presiding bishop's focus must be on being present with and strengthening our local congregations to respond to this unique moment in our nation's history.

Describe how your current and past board and committee membership experiences or previous congregation, synod, churchwide, or community-related activities have significantly impacted you and informed your vision for serving as this church's next presiding bishop.

Serving on boards and on congregational councils I have learned to analyze systems, identify stakeholders, and do power analysis. Boards typically have two primary drivers of decisions. The first is institutional or personal preservation. The second, in healthier boards, is to realize the status quo will not become the future. Those boards that are moving their institutions forward ask hard questions and seek adaptive solutions, not technical fixes. I have witnessed how a stubborn few can wield their power to prevent progress or maintain power. In contrast I have seen members of a board recognize the reality of their institution and focus on the mission rather than preservation. The presiding bishop is first and foremost a pastor. Serving as CEO they should utilize their pastoral skills to hold up truth to the leadership and guide them prayerfully to discern God's preferred future. In our system this means working closely with the ELCA Vice President, speaking truth to entrenched systems, and churchwide stakeholders. A vision must be cast focused on the local congregation and making the case for why being part of the ELCA helps them to achieve their mission of proclaiming the gospel and serving their community.

**Biographical Information for Possible Nominee
for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

Bishop Kevin Jones

Current Position: Bishop of the Northeastern Iowa Synod

Congregation of Membership: Trinity Lutheran, Mason City, IA

Date and Year of Ordination: 1993-07-25

Previous Positions:

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran, Mason City, IA (2014–2021)

Pastor, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Marion, IA (2001–2014)

Pastor, Blair Lutheran Parish, Blair, WI (1993–2001)

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

M.Div., Luther Northwestern Seminary (1989–1993)

B.A., Central Michigan University (1982–1986)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Lutheran Services in Iowa 2021–present

Wartburg College Board of Regents 2021–present

COB Roster Care Committee 2021–present

COB Bishop Formation Committee 2024–present

Reconsiderations of Human Sexuality Social Statement Task Force 2024–present

Region 5 Steering Committee 2021–present

Past Board and Committee Membership:

North Central Iowa Habitat for Humanity 2018–2024

Ewalu Camp and Retreat Board 2019–2021

North Iowa Children's Alliance Board (Secretary/Chair) 2016–2020

Northeastern Iowa Synod Candidacy Committee (Chair) 2016–2021

Northeastern Iowa Synod Consultation Committee 2018–2021

Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as the next presiding bishop.

1. A considerable number of long walks, bike rides, commutes, and journal entries listening and talking with the Holy Spirit, making it clear that I don't want this call and hearing that the conversation isn't over just yet; 2. Conversations with synod staff, trusted friends, colleagues, and my spiritual director seeking their wisdom and prayers; 3. Conversations with family about their willingness and ability to support and put up with me and the relentless demands of this potential call.

What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of presiding bishop?

The ELCA constitution (13.21) says the Presiding Bishop, "shall be a teacher of the faith of this church and shall provide leadership for the life and witness of this church." It then proceeds to list eleven expectations for providing leadership, none of which relate to teaching the faith. I am more comfortable on the teaching side of this equation. My spiritual gifts (helps, faith, shepherding, teaching, wisdom) help me observe complex situations, synthesize them in helpful and teachable ways, and use my creative and artistic skills to help others understand and use their gifts in ways that are aligned with the Holy Spirit. I worry that the duties required by the office of presiding bishop do not provide adequate space or time to dwell in the creativity of the Spirit necessary before leading and teaching our expanding and growing faith in healthy, faithful ways.

What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities of this church in the next six years, and how would you approach them?

The ELCA continues to treat symptoms of our current context without admitting or understanding that the source of our anxiety and the changes we experience are due to human evolution. Jesus called them birth pangs (Mt. 24:8). We are at the threshold of new stages in human development that call us to be more inclusive, following the ever-widening pattern of welcome found in scripture. We need to discern our identity within, and as part of, global, environmental, and ecclesial communities. Apart from an audible voice from heaven, the process of discernment brings together past experience, current context, and deliberation through prayer, patient listening, and careful conversation. We must promote practices and experiences that help people grow spiritually throughout life. We need to develop additional rituals, uncover new sacred texts, and learn to listen to the still small voice that speaks to us out of the whirlwinds of chaos. Repentance is necessary for the ways we seek self-righteousness (our “fix-it” culture) instead of trusting in the righteousness we have from Christ. Intimacy with the Holy Spirit will lead us to engage the challenges of institutional contraction, and continued racial, gender, ability, and socio-economic injustices, in healthier ways.

Describe how your current and past board and committee membership experiences or previous congregation, synod, churchwide, or community-related activities have significantly impacted you and informed your vision for serving as this church’s next presiding bishop.

I served as an associate pastor for twenty-seven years in three calls: A three-point, small town and rural parish, a suburban congregation in a growing community, and a large congregation in a small city. I have learned that a lot can be accomplished when one is not consumed by the duties and expectations of being the one in charge. My service through community, social service, and higher education boards, and on committees and task forces in Synods and at churchwide reveal a complex tapestry of a church that contains immense beauty and utter frustration. Every time I am ready to walk away, the Holy Spirit calls to me out of the chaos and I keep showing up to see what she has to offer and demand this time. TBH I don’t have a vision for serving as the next presiding bishop. I trust the Holy Spirit has that vision for whoever she calls forth.

**Biographical Information for Possible Nominee
for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

Bishop Craig Schweitzer

Current Position: Bishop of the Western North Dakota Synod

Congregation of Membership: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Bismarck, ND

Date and Year of Ordination: 2010-09-16

Previous Positions:

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Bismarck, ND (2002–2020) Music and Worship Minister (2002–2010) Associate Pastor (2010–2014) Senior Pastor (2014–2020)
Bismarck State College & University of Mary, Bismarck, ND (1995–2001), Adjunct music faculty
6x6 Guitar Studio, Bismarck, ND (1986–2002), Owner and instructor of private guitar studio
Makoche' Recording Company (1989–1997), Operations Director and Audio Engineer

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

Master of Science in Strategic Leadership, University of Mary, Bismarck, ND (2015)
Certificate in Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM), Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA (2010)
Bachelor of Science in Music Education, University of Mary, Bismarck, ND (1993)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Board of Regents, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN
Governing Board, Missouri Slope Lutheran Care Center, Bismarck, ND
Congregational Vitality Committee, ELCA Conference of Bishops
Doctrine of Discovery Task Force, Office of the Presiding Bishop
Region 3 Liaison Bishop to ELCA Church Council
Service and Justice Committee, ELCA Church Council

Past Board and Committee Membership:

WND Synod Leadership Team for “Leadership for Faithful Innovation” strategic mission project with Luther Seminary
ELCA Churchwide Assembly worship leadership team in 2011, 2013, 2016, 2019
Executive Committee of the ELCA Large Congregation Senior Pastor’s Leadership Conference
Disciplinary Board for the North Dakota Supreme Court
Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota
Christian Leadership Center Board of Directors, University of Mary, Bismarck, ND
Great Plains Jazz Society, Bismarck, ND

Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as the next presiding bishop.

Two simple words—prayer and people. I was raised in the Roman Catholic tradition. Discovering the ELCA as a young adult was life-changing and life-giving. In the ELCA, I encountered people who expressed welcome in ways that I had never felt before in a faith community. Those early experiences of the ELCA continue to shape my faith and life. All are welcome at the table, always. As I look back now, those early experiences were answers to prayer. A vocation serving in the church was never part of my plan. And the very thought of being called to serve as presiding bishop is hard for me to wrap my head around. I trust the Spirit knows what’s happening. As with any call I’ve had, if the call to serve as presiding bishop becomes a reality, I will seek to serve faithfully and courageously every step of the way. I will continue to ground my leadership as a reflection of the warm welcome of unconditional love and grace that I first received in an ELCA congregation nearly 30 years ago. I pray that I continue to share that welcome, and invitation, with everyone God places before me.

What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of presiding bishop?

After ordination, I believed that I was being called to serve in complex settings. This belief led me to return to graduate school to study leadership, finance, and organizational systems. I completed a Master of Science in Strategic Leadership (MSSL) in 2015. I believe this additional education, and an ongoing hunger for life-long learning, continues to shape my leadership. My practice of leadership seeks to find the best possible solutions to bring forth the most positive outcomes for everyone involved. I center everything I do in prayer and am constantly asking questions like “How will this help the gospel to be proclaimed more broadly and boldly in order for the church thrive?”, “How will God’s children be cared for through this decision?”, “Who is missing at the table that should be here?” I began serving in church leadership in 2002. I have always tried to surround myself with people smarter than I am or who have gifts and skillsets different than mine. I lean deeply into these relationships, trusting that through them, all people are included and welcomed, as the mission and ministry God is doing through us brings forth blessings as we live and serve together in Christ.

What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities of this church in the next six years, and how would you approach them?

I think the principal challenges we face as a church are also opportunities for renewal. When the ELCA was born, I believe it struggled to embrace its purpose. We emerged from many different Lutheran traditions who had many opinions about the church’s purpose. I’m not sure we’ve ever resolved those disagreements. Over the years, schisms have emerged. It is too easy to sever relationships when we disagree, instead of seeking to find common ground in the midst of disagreement. When I joined the ELCA, it felt like a “big-tent” church. God’s children were accepted and welcomed—regardless of political views, sexuality, socio-economic status, or anything else that could get in the way of our ability to be in relationship. I believe the opportunities before us will invite us to dig deeply into scripture and prayer; to study anew the teachings of Lutheran Christianity; and to embrace an ecclesiology that reflects who we are as church in a post-religious institution world. This is a refining fire moment for the ELCA. It will challenge us to celebrate what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will continue to do as we are invited into renewal with each new day.

Describe how your current and past board and committee membership experiences or previous congregation, synod, churchwide, or community-related activities have significantly impacted you and informed your vision for serving as this church’s next presiding bishop.

One of the ELCA’s first leaders, Lowell Almen, shares this insight in his book *A Dream Eclipsed*. “Presiding Bishop Eaton’s successor will face an era of enormous challenge. Fostering renewed awareness of the ELCA’s commitment to unity and interdependence throughout congregations, synods, and churchwide ministries will require enormous energy and herculean effort.” (pg. 193) I believe that my leadership experiences inside and outside of the institutional church have given me a unique vision for leadership and church. I have served for more than three decades as a musician in the church, including four churchwide assemblies. I have taught in rural elementary schools and regional universities. I was elected a synod bishop in an online synod assembly during the Covid-19 pandemic. I have served on governing boards at higher education institutions and social service ministries, local arts organizations and regional senior living communities. If I am called to serve as the next presiding bishop, I will unceasingly seek God’s help and guidance. I will embrace the unending movement of the Holy Spirit as we are led together into a future ministry and mission that is united in the saving grace of Christ Jesus, where all God’s children are welcomed and included.

**Biographical Information for Possible Nominee
for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

Pastor Angela Shannon

Current Position: Assistant to the Bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the ELCA

Congregation of Membership: Trinity Lutheran Church, Wyandanch, New York

Date and Year of Ordination: 1997-01-12

Previous Positions:

All Saints Lutheran, (Solo) Pastor, Bowie, MD, 2019–2023
Luther Seminary, Dean of Student Life, St. Paul, MN, 2017–2018
King of Glory Lutheran, Assoc. Pastor, Dallas, TX, 2014–2017
Light of the Cross Food Pantry, Fort Wayne, IN, Coordinator, 2006–2014
Calvary Lutheran Church, Intentional Interim, 2011–2014
Advent Lutheran Church, Sylvania, OH, Intention Interim Pastor, 2006–2007
Trinity English Lutheran Church, Assoc. Pastor, Fort Wayne, IN, 2002–2006
Augustana Lutheran Church, Houston, TX, (Solo) Pastor, 1997–2000

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

M.Div, 1996, Lutheran School of Theology
BA, 1984, Valparaiso University

Current Board and Committee Membership:

ELCA Educational Debt Task Force

Past Board and Committee Membership:

I have served on various committees and boards dating as far back as my seminary education. I have served as a Regional Rep for the African American Lutheran Association (now African Descent Lutheran Association) in the late 90's. I have served in the following capacities:

- National Vice President from 2019 through the COVID 19 pandemic;
- Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries board membership;
- ELCA Program Committee for Evangelical Outreach;
- Rotating Circle of Bridget's Place of Christ Church Cathedral, Houston, Tx;
- Wellspring Ministries, Ft. Wayne, IN;
- United Way, Ft. Wayne, IN;
- Student Rep, LSTC Board of Directors.

Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as the next presiding bishop.

Prayer and pleading for God's guidance and as American mystic, Rev. Howard Thurman would say "listening for the sound of the genuine."

What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of presiding bishop?

"God uses crooked sticks to write straight" is attributed to Ignatius. I believe this wholeheartedly. I bring an intentional prayer life which involve deep listening for the Holy Spirit's "voice" rather promptings an urgings. I understand the Doctrine of Two Kingdoms, the spiritual and the temporal. I am careful let the temporal one overtake the spiritual one. Unfettered justice without mercy betrays the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As such I bring experience and institutional knowledge. I have a clear-eyed awareness of what is best about ELCA and what is in need of healing and repair. Even still, I love the church, especially local congregations and I want to see them thrive. My area of expertise is reconciliation and conflict transformation. I study this area intensely because I believe it to be the work of the baptized.

What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities of this church in the next six years, and how would you approach them?

The principal challenges are many and they loom large in this zeitgeist. With all that is happening, realistically, I think we should choose three foci, no more than four. Christian Nationalism inhibits our ability to look upon each other through the prism of our baptism which is our divine commissioning for how we encounter as rapidly changing church and world. In my current position, I am aware of the dearth of pastors. We should continue to explore and even experiment with different configurations of ministry to support local congregations. “Church inertia” is very real challenge. Innovation can be scary but I deeply believe even in our mistakes, God will not abandon us. The center will always hold in Christ.

Describe how your current and past board and committee membership experiences or previous congregation, synod, churchwide, or community-related activities have significantly impacted you and informed your vision for serving as this church’s next presiding bishop.

Again, I have institutional and experiential awareness of how organization operate especially tempered by the Gospel. I have seen the ELCA at its zenith and at its nadir. I love this church enough to hold it accountable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I have served very large congregations, mid-sized ones as well small congregations. All of them are of import. In my mind, this is how you embody hospitality. My strengths include the ministry of reconciliation, and conflict transformation but require deep listening and humility. These are lessons that I have learned along the way and sometimes—the hard way. I have learned how to “pray and play the long game.” Specifically, through classroom knowledge and application, I’ve learned patience and how to read context. This makes me a strong administrator.

**Biographical Information for Possible Nominee
for Presiding Bishop of the ELCA**

Bishop Kevin Strickland

Current Position: Bishop of the Southeastern Synod (9D)

Congregation of Membership: Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Atlanta, GA

Date and Year of Ordination: 2008-06-14

Previous Positions:

Assistant to the Presiding Bishop and Executive for Worship, ELCA Churchwide Office, Chicago, IL
Pastor, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Nashville, TN
Pastor, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Maryville, TN
Youth and Family Minister, Incarnation Lutheran Church, Columbia, SC
Parish Life Director, St. Philip's Lutheran Church, Newberry, SC
Youth Minister, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Newberry, SC
Youth Minister, Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church, West Columbia, SC

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

Doctor of Ministry, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA (2024)
Master of Divinity, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC (2008)
Bachelor of Arts in Religion, Philosophy, and History, Newberry College, Newberry, SC (2004)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

ELCA Conference of Bishops
Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Council
Inspiritus
Middle East Ready Bench of the ELCA
Ecumenical and Interreligious Committee of the ELCA
Quality of Call Initiative
First Call Process
Immigration Ready Bench of the ELCA
ELCA Church Council Region Nine Liaison Bishop
Augsburg Fortress Board of Trustees
Newberry College Board of Trustees
NovusWay Board of Trustees
Region Nine Council
James R. Crumley Region Nine Archives
Day 1 Advisory Council
Kessler Reformation Board of Pitts Library for Emory University

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Churchwide Assembly Planning Committee
Director for the first ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering and the 2023 ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering
Planning Team
Staff on the ELCA Theological and Ethical Concerns Committee
Consultation for the Common Text Ecumenical group
International English Language Liturgical Consultation
500th Anniversary Reformation Planning Team
Augsburg Fortress Resource Committee,
Staff on the Entrance Rite task force for Ministers of Word and Service
Staff on the Academy Committee for the Conference of Bishops

Describe your process of discerning this potential call to serve as the next presiding bishop.

“O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us, and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” I have prayed this every day since being elected as synod bishop—one I also have prayed in discerning my openness to being called as the next presiding bishop. I have always trusted that wherever the Holy Spirit calls me, I will be equipped to lead. I recognize it is not up to the presiding bishop to fix, solve, or save the church because this is God’s church, and God has already saved each of us. Grounded in my baptism, I am open to following where the Spirit leads. My willingness to be called as the next presiding bishop is filled with prayers for God’s help and guidance, trepidation, discerning conversation with my spouse, trusted friends and mentors, and careful research for possible planning.

What specific leadership skills and spiritual gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of presiding bishop?

As a leader who has served in all three expressions of the ELCA, I would bring a unique perspective. Understanding the particular and multifaceted strengths and challenges of our church, I know that no one person can do this role alone. We are called to do this work together. I am a listener and committed to learning from a wide variety of views and mindsets. I bring expertise in strategic visioning, innovative program development, conflict resolution, pastoral accompaniment, creative worship, and commitment to establishing a wide diversity of leadership—to name a few. I believe the church is best led by those who serve from being fed by the means of grace and at the foot of the cross. Leading through the lens of how what we do and say calls us to be an active embodiment of God’s radical grace and not a stagnant organization.

What do you see as principal challenges and opportunities of this church in the next six years, and how would you approach them?

Our challenges can also be our greatest opportunities: How can we imagine a church we haven’t been before? Rooted in the scandalous particularity of our theology of grace, we can articulate a clearer purpose statement as church—one that names our commitments to the most vulnerable, to the marginalized, to the accompaniment of all persons, and to living out our faith in the public square where the gospel meets civic life. We should approach this with prayer, serious strategic planning and tight evaluation—eliminating things that aren’t working and listening as we discern where the Holy Spirit is calling us. Within the first year there needs to be clear guidance given to our human resource needs within rostered ministers and the financial availability of congregations. We need to review churchwide ministries with fresh clarity about what work belongs there, and what is better suited for synods and congregations. We must courageously assess what structures serve the gospel, and which ones no longer do. Our future must be lighter, clearer, more relational—and always centered in our baptismal calling.

Describe how your current and past board and committee membership experiences or previous congregation, synod, churchwide, or community-related activities have significantly impacted you and informed your vision for serving as this church’s next presiding bishop.

Through my experiences serving as pastor, assistant to the presiding bishop, and bishop, I have been able to see the church at her best and at times her worst. Those experiences have allowed me to learn the inner workings of our church and give me a great appreciation for all we do as the church together across the ELCA and the world. These opportunities have most significantly shaped me through learning from other leaders, engaging with diverse and multiethnic cultures, and witnessing how a clear sense of vision and purpose can make or break an organization. I have seen how conflict can effectively transform an organization or can lead to coercion. These multifaceted experiences inform and shape my vocation currently and would impact a vision as the next presiding bishop. Such as: diversity is always a gift, listening is key, conflict is necessary and needs tending, leadership requires grit, and nothing works well if done by a lone ranger. Community is key! My vision is not to manage the church, but to shepherd it—with clarity, courage, and a deep trust in God’s grace.