

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM:  
NOMINEE FOR BISHOP OF THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD**

- 1. Name:** Jennifer J. Thomas
- 2. Current Position:** Alumni and Church Engagement Manager, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Chicago, IL (deployed in Shawnee, KS)
- 3. Congregation Membership:** Salem Lutheran Church, Lenexa, KS
- 4. Date and Year of Birth:**
- 5. Date and Year of Ordination:** July 26, 1998
- 6. Previous Positions:**  
Senior Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO, 2007-2014  
Co-Pastor / Outreach Pastor, Lake Park Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, WI, 1998-2007
- 7. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):**  
M.Div., Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, certificate in urban ministry, 1998  
B.A. in Math and Religion, Augustana College, Sioux Falls, SD, 1994  
h.s. diploma, Milbank High School, Milbank, SD 1990
- 8. List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.**  
Dean, Area Ministry 7, Central States Synod 2010-2014  
Dean, Coalition, Milwaukee Synod, 2005-07  
ELCA Church Council and Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding, 2003-07  
Milwaukee Synod Council and Executive Committee, 2001-2005  
European Descent Lutheran Association for Racial Justice 2014 – present
- 9. List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.**  
Board member, Kansas Interfaith Action, 2018-present  
Band Boosters, fundraising committee, 2017-present  
Vice President of Missouri Faith Voices, 2011-2014  
Religious Leaders Caucus Chair, Communities Creating Opportunity, 2008-2011  
Religious Leaders Caucus Chair, MICA, Milwaukee, WI, 2004-2007
- 10. What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)**  
My love of God, my neighbor, and the church are my top gifts for this call. In twenty years of ordained ministry, I've excelled in fundraising, project management, pastoral care, community development, public speaking, and strategic mission planning. God's call within my prayer life combined with my experience with the church, its joys and sorrows, accomplishments and failings, are gifts as well. In my first call, I was instrumental in a cultural turn around that led to growth from 40 to 400 members. In my second call, I developed skills in resiliency and conflict management. My connections across the church led to my election to serve on the ELCA Church Council and my appointment to the Blue Ribbon Committee on Mission Funding. I honed skills at engaging people, compromise, and leading forward with compassion. In almost five years at

LSTC, I've become a professional fundraiser: annual support, major gifts, special events, and planned giving. I have experience in recruiting, retaining, and supervising staff and volunteers, creating and maintaining endowments, raising money for capital and debt reduction campaigns.

**11. What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)**

I'm excited about what we could do together as church in this region. Many in the church have lost faith in the value of being church together. We must ask: "What is God calling us to do?" I see great strengths, ministries, and potential in the Central States Synod. The region needs the church to show up and make a difference. There is no greater time in the history of the church to be the church. We have so much to offer. We have the good news to proclaim. We have the gifts and capacity to fulfill our mission. God's faithfulness and our gifts equip us to face the realities of decline and to continue to ask, what new thing God is up to now? This is a beautiful synod of the ELCA, representing the unity and diversity that is our church – from the diversity among our congregations to the diversity within our leadership as well as the unique context of each ministry – and yet, we are united in the baptismal call that Christ has placed upon us. We are called to the journey together, to serve and advocate for those in need in our communities, to invite and encouraging one another in faith, to give generously, to study scripture, to worship together, and to pray for one another and the whole world.

**12. Describe your leadership style. (1,000 characters maximum)**

My leadership style is relational. I meet people where they are and together strive to use their giftedness and passions to create and strengthen the church. Leadership training through several avenues has shaped my collaborative and grass roots leadership techniques. Fostering relationships through one to one conversations, deep listening, mapping assets, and determining the potential of myself, others, congregations, and other partners are leadership skills I employ. Relationships with Lutheran, ecumenical, and interfaith colleagues have led to service, advocacy and outreach ministries. I've served on community organization leadership tables in Wisconsin, Kansas, and Missouri. I consider myself a shepherd. I can be a pace-setter, or I can circle back to walk with people where they are. My leadership style is very adaptive depending upon the needs of the individuals or community.