

Central States Synod 2019 Synod Assembly

Overland Park, Kan. • June 6-8

Preface: Importance of Bishops election

The election of the bishop is not just an election, but it is also a call process. As such, we pray that the Holy Spirit will be among us as individuals and within this whole church, as we engage in discernment regarding the election of the bishop. Individual and group reflection, discussion, and prayerful consideration are all important parts of the discernment process – both for individuals who may become nominees and for all members of this church, as we reflect on its needs and the attributes desired of our leaders.

Every six years, the members of the Central States Synod of the ELCA elect a bishop. When we gather in Assembly on June 6-8, 2019, we will participate in electing a bishop for the next six-year term. That election, as always, will be through an ecclesiastical ballot.

Who can be elected bishop?

Any person who is an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament currently on the active roster of the ELCA is eligible.

Responsibilities of the bishop - From the Central States Synod constitution

S8.10. Bishop

†S8.11. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

†S8.12. As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall:

- a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accordance with the Confession of Faith of this church.
- b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament and its ministers of Word and Service.
- c. Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synodical bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
- d. Consecrate (or provide for the consecration of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service.
- e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in this synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.
- f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.
- g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in doing:
 - 1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;
 - 2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;
 - 3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod;
 - 4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning the synod's life and work; and
 - 5) Advise and counsel this synod's related institutions and organizations.
- h. Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church and in so doing:
 - 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accordance with the Confession of Faith of this church;
 - 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod;
 - 3) Be the chief ecumenical officer of this synod;
 - 4) Consult regularly with other synodical bishops and the Conference of Bishops;

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- 5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;
 - 6) Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod, and
 - 7) Be *ex officio* a member of the Churchwide Assembly.
- i. Oversee and administer the work of this synod and in so doing:
- 1) Serve as the president of the synod corporation and be the chief executive and administrative officer of this synod, who is authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to sign deeds or other instruments and to affix the seal of this synod;
 - 2) Preside at all meetings of the Synod Assembly and provide for the preparation of the agenda for the Synod Assembly, Synod Council and the council's Executive Committee;
 - 3) Ensure that the constitution and bylaws of this synod and the churchwide organization are duly observed within the synod, and that the actions of this synod in conformity therewith are carried into effect;
 - 4) Exercise supervision over the work of the other officers;
 - 5) Coordinate the work of all synodical staff members;
 - 6) Appoint all committees for which provision is not otherwise made;
 - 7) Be a member of all committees and any other organizational units of this synod, except as otherwise provided in the constitution;
 - 8) Provide for preparation and maintenance of synodical rosters containing the names and addresses of all rostered ministers of this synod and a record of the calls under which they are serving or the date on which they become retired or disabled; and
 - 9) Annually bring to the attention of the Synod Council the names of all rostered ministers on leave from call or engaged in approved graduate study in conformity with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church and pursuant to prior action of this synod through the Synod Council;
 - 10) Provide for prompt reporting to the secretary of this church:
 - a) additions to and subtractions from the rosters of this synod and the register of congregations;
 - b) the issuance of certificate of transfer for rostered ministers in good standing who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested, regular letter of call under the jurisdiction of another synod; and
 - c) the entrance of the names of such persons for whom proper certificates of transfer have been received;
 - 11) Provide for preparation and maintenance of a register of the congregations of this synod and the names of the laypersons who have been elected to represent them; and
 - 12) Appoint a statistician of the synod, who shall secure the parochial reports of the congregations, and make the reports available to the secretary of this church for collation, analysis, and distribution of the statistical summaries to this synod and the other synods of this church.

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Work done prior to assembly

The Synod Council appointed an Election Facilitation Committee (EFC) to oversee a process in the months leading up to Synod Assembly that will help us, the members of Central States Synod, with a process of additional discernment and education about who the next bishop might be.

- **Informational Survey:** The EFC sought input through a survey about the state of the synod, and the needs and desires for the next term of the bishop. This information was compiled to create a comprehensive picture of this synod.

Bishop's Election Survey, results summary

Demographics:

- 178 individuals responded, 91 female, 72 male, 15 did not answer.
- 70% were over 60 years old and 76% have attended an ELCA congregation more than 16 years.
- 60% hold leadership roles within their congregation and 18% are rostered leaders.
- Respondents were evenly split between rural, small community, small city, medium community and large cities.

General attitudes:

- The majority of responses were "optimistic" or "very optimistic" about their congregation's future (59%), the synod's future (52%), and the future of the ELCA (65%).
- 56% reported that they work well with other congregations
- 41% understand synod functions, while only 35% feel they understand synod activities & missions well.
- Congregational strengths are made up of; Evangelism, Pastoral care, children, youth & music ministries, generosity & hospitality, strong lay leadership and good preaching.
- Bethany College, Camp Tomah Shinga, Campus Ministries and Mission Partners were identified as the strongest ministries of the synod.

Expectations and Challenges:

- Expectations for the Bishop over the next six years varied. Some prominent themes included guiding the church into the future despite declining attendance and a changing culture. Including ways to increase youth and young adult involvement, continued inclusion of diversity, and keeping the church active in our world with an emphasis on community service. Other comments sought strong leadership and creative ideas to connect with small congregations, strengthen the PMA program, provide tools to each community of faith and to offer pastoral care to our leaders and congregations.
- Respondents also identified many diverse challenges facing the Bishop. Some addressed pastoral shortages, decreased funding, aging membership, and managing church closings. Others identified the challenge of making sure the church not only welcomes but also supports people of all races, social classes, gender identity, and sexual orientation, while still others recommended the bishop to not get caught up with the politics or social statements on whatever topics catch the media attention. Some encouraged rethinking the church of the past and moving towards new ways of 'being church' challenging congregations to grow and study with fellow ELCA churches and other denominations. Regardless, the geographic cultural differences across the synod pose a challenge to overcome negative impressions and make the synod relevant.

- **Sought interested individuals:** The EFC allowed members of the synod to submit names of individuals (Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the ELCA), that they believed should discern a call to the office of bishop. This allowed for months of conversation and discernment for those individuals to consider this call. Individuals could self-identify or be identified, and they do not need to currently serve in this synod. This information was collected and disseminated prior to the assembly.

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- **Shared information with the voting members:** Information about those potential nominees was shared with the congregations, worshipping communities and organizations within the synod. Members of the synod's congregations, worshipping communities and organizations were encouraged to spend time learning about these individuals, praying and discerning for themselves whom they would like to nominate for the bishop's election at Synod Assembly.

What is an Ecclesiastical ballot?

Ecclesiastical Ballot at Synod Assembly: The first ballot of the ecclesiastical ballot allows for all voting members at Synod Assembly to cast a vote for bishop. Voting members may write the name of any Minister of Word and Sacrament on the active roster of the ELCA, regardless of whether or not the person for whom they are voting has had their name put forth prior to the assembly. Note: individuals identified prior to assembly are NOT officially nominated until their name is submitted during the first ballot.

How will the voting process work?

Upon arrival at assembly, all voting members must check-in at registration. Registration will close thirty minutes prior to the start of each plenary session in the bishop's election. Registration will reopen once each ballot has been declared closed. In order to participate in any vote during assembly, the voting member must have successfully checked-in at registration and be seated in the assembly hall. We ask all voting members to be seated a few minutes prior to each ballot to accommodate the process.

The Election Facilitation Committee, Synod Council and Churchwide representative will oversee the process of ecclesiastical ballot at the Assembly.

- **The first ballot, (ecclesiastical ballot) Thursday, June 6, Plenary Session I**
 - A blank ballot will be issued to all voting members. Voting members may enter the name of any clergy person rostered in the ELCA. Note that individuals pre-identified are NOT automatically nominated and still requires at least one voting member to write in his/her name on the first ballot in order to be nominated for the office of bishop. The names of eligible persons not pre-identified may also be written in by voting members on the first ballot.
- **Announcement of results from the first ballot, Friday, June 7, Plenary Session II**
 - **75% of the legal votes cast are required for an election.**
 - If there is not an election, after the results of this ballot are announced, **persons may remove their name from consideration no later than June 7, 10:00 a.m. This is the only point at which names can be removed.**
 - Persons who wish to go forward in the process, must supply biographical information and disclosure for a background check at this time (deadline 10:30am June 7.)
- **The second ballot, Friday, June 7, Plenary Session III**
 - The ballot will list all candidates nominated on the first ballot who did not withdraw.
- **Announcement of results from the second ballot, Friday, June 7, Plenary Session IV**
 - **75% of the legal votes cast are required for an election.**
- **The third ballot, Friday, June 7, Plenary Session IV**
 - The ballot will list the seven individuals with the highest number of votes from the previous ballot (including ties.)
 - Prior to the ballot, the seven individuals will each have 90 seconds to address the assembly
 - **Two-thirds of the legal votes cast are required for an election.**

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- **The fourth ballot, Friday, June 7, Plenary Session V**
 - The ballot will list the three individuals with the highest number of votes from the previous ballot (including ties.)
 - Prior to the ballot, the assembly will be divided into three groups. The three individuals will be given the opportunity to answer questions for 25 minutes with each group.
 - **60% of the legal votes cast are required for an election.**
- **The fifth ballot, Saturday, June 8, Plenary Session VI**
 - The ballot will list the two individuals with highest number of votes from the previous ballot (including ties.)
 - **The person receiving the majority of the legal votes cast is elected bishop.**
- **Additional ballots**
 - Should additional ballots be required, they will follow the procedure of the fifth ballot.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: NOMINEES FOR BISHOP OF THE CENTRAL STATES SYNOD PRE-ASSEMBLY

Below are individuals that have been identified as a candidate for Bishop of the Central States Synod.

Publishing these names is not an official nomination. Whether pre-identified or not, an individual is nominated exclusively by having their name submitted on the first ballot of the bishop's election. The first ballot is scheduled to take place during the first plenary session of synod assembly, Thursday, June 6th.

Name: **Rev. Aimée Frye Appell**

Current Position: Pastor, Peace Lutheran Church, Washington, MO

Congregation Membership: Peace Lutheran Church, Washington, MO

Date and Year of Ordination: May 30, 2010



Previous Positions: Vicar, Christ Church Lutheran, Minneapolis, MN, 2008-2009 Reading

Team Convener, Church Innovations, St. Paul, MN, 2008-2010

Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first): M.Div. - Luther Seminary, 2010 B.A. - University of Virginia, 1993

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod. Process Builder - Women & Justice Social Statement Church in Society Team, CSS Synod

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod. Chair - Neighbors United - Undoing Racism, 2014-present Franklin County Human Rights Task Force, 2016-present Chair - Vacation Culture School - 2017-present Parliament of the World's Religions - 2009, 2015 Women's Interfaith Conference, St. Louis - 2015-2017

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? My strongest gifts are for preaching and proclamation, for writing, and for articulating my understanding of the gospel. My early life growing up outside the church allows me to bring a non-traditional perspective to the office, and to the work of proclamation. I tend to ask unusual questions and look for unusual answers. I have a strong theology of reconciliation, which prompts me to seek compromise where I can. However, I will stand firm on issues central to the gospel, especially where justice and grace are concerned. I have built relationships of mutual trust with individuals from across the Christian faith, and from other faith traditions and belief systems.

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? The heart of our work as the Church needs to be a deep and introspective period of self-examination, followed by the ongoing work of repentance, around Christianity's role in the perpetuation of colonialism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, and other supremacist ideologies. Only then will we be able to seek restitution and reconciliation. This will be hard work. It will require dying to some things - the 1950s models of large churches and even larger physical plants; full-time, single-occupation pastors; the centrality of the Church as the political and emotional heart of every community; the Christendom models of generational renewal, relying on the next generation to carry on what we have always done; the belief that our way is the best or only way to do and see things. The Church must live as if God's promises were true for us today, modeling daily renewal of our baptisms through repentance and resurrection living. I would like the synod to offer resources and training for congregations to engage in this work.

Describe your leadership style. I believe that the Church's primary work is done in and through relationships, which makes me a collaborative leader. I see the key to leadership as equipping others for their. I prefer to work with a team, building relationships in the service of our mission. As a leader, I keep the team's focus on the mission and vision, gently guiding our work and making connections. I enjoy helping others use their gifts together to solve problems. I see the big picture, and work to shepherd the group toward our common goal, trusting others on the team to tend to their own details. I am flexible and easy-going, responding easily to changing circumstances. I have led several organizations through conflict situations, helping them to find the opportunities for growth and deepening of relationships through differences of opinion and difficult circumstances.

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Name: **Rev. Susan Candea**

Current Position: Bishop's Associate and Director for Evangelical Mission of the Central States Synod of the ELCA

Congregation Membership: Atonement Lutheran Church, Overland Park, KS

Date and Year of Ordination: September 25, 1983



Previous Positions: Co-pastor at St. John's, Ellis, KS and Immanuel, WaKeeney, KS; pastor at Our Savior's, Topeka, KS; pastor at King of Glory, Loveland, CO

Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first): Masters of Divinity, Wartburg Theological Seminary, 1979- 1983 BA in Political Science, California Lutheran College, 1977- 1979 University of Northern Colorado, 1975-1977 High School Diploma, Wasson High School, Colorado Spring, graduated 1975

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod. Synod Council Member Consulting Committee for the ELCA Director for Justice for Women Advocacy Committee of the Rocky Mountain Synod Campus Ministry Team ELCA Lay Schools of Theology Task Force

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod. Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer Doorstep – Community Food Bank and Social Service agency Homeless Shelter Network Topeka Center for Peace and Justice School Board Community Member

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? I have thirty years of experience as a parish pastor serving three congregations in different settings and almost six years serving on the synod staff. I know and deeply care about the church and the variety of ways in which ministry happens throughout this synod. At the same time I am open and eager to continue learning, to listen, to try new things, aware that I do not know everything. I am organized and attentive to details while keeping the larger picture in view, understanding that good structure can enable flexibility and creativity. I have good communication skills, able to listen as well as ask sometimes difficult questions and give direct feedback. My greatest gift is the Lutheran understanding of grace, that God came down to us in Christ, which centers me, emboldens me, humbles me, and enables me know that everyone has a place at the table and that we are all called to participate in God's reign of justice and peace.

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? I believe the principal challenge is to get clarity about our purpose and mission as the church in a changing culture with diminishing resources and not let fear and anxiety define who and what we are as the people of God, but to remember that God is active and present in the world and that our role as the church is to participate in what God is already doing. To address this challenge we need to raise up and support leaders, both rostered and lay working together in partnership, to assist congregations to listen to God, to one another, and to the community around them in more intentional ways, and discern how the Spirit is calling them to share and live out the grace and hope of the gospel. We also need to assist individuals as well as communities to deepen their own discipleship as followers of Jesus. We cannot reach out to meet the challenges our church is facing unless we are deeply rooted and reliant upon the one who has called us into faith.

Describe your leadership style. I am flexible and open as well as direct and decisive. Those may seem like contradictions, but different situations call for different styles and I believe a good leader must listen well, be self-aware, and discern what style is needed most whether it is more direct intervention or a less involved, supportive role. I take seriously the concerns and feedback of others, aware of my own growing edges, able to own my mistakes while also having the confidence to step up to make decisions when needed, to set boundaries and expectations as well as give clear directions which makes it easier for others to more fully participate. Direct, open communication that addresses the real issues in a respectful and caring way is key to my style of leadership, enabling me to tend to relationships while still moving forward to make plans and accomplish tasks.

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Name: **Rev. Jay Grave**

Current Position: Senior Pastor

Congregation Membership: Hosanna Lutheran Church, Mandeville, Louisiana

Date and Year of Ordination: December 11, 2005



Previous Positions: Associate Pastor, Zion Lutheran, Fredericksburg, TX. Pastor, Big Bend Lutheran, Big Bend, MN. Sr. Pastor, American Lutheran Church, Windom, MN. Pastor, Our Savior's, Camdenton, MO,

Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first): Doctorate of Ministry, Luther Seminary, 2016 Masters of Divinity, Luther Seminary, 2005 Zertificate Deutsch, Prein Am Chemise, 2004 Bachelors of Arts, Wartburg College, 1996

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

Tri-Synodical Planning Team (TX-LA, North TX-LA, Southwestern Texas Synods) Interim Assistant to the Bishop (Southwest MN Synod) Synod Assembly Presenter of Yearlong Stewardship Program (Central States Synod) Senior High Synod Gathering Presenter (Southwest MN & Southwest Texas Synods) Resolutions Committee (Central States Synod)

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod. City Council Prayer Leader, Mandeville, LA President of Ministerium, Windom, MN National Day of Pray Planning Team, Camdenton, MO Assistant Wrestling Coach, Montevideo High School, Montevideo, MN Civil Air Patrol Chaplain, Fredericksburg, TX

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? I have spent my entire life studying and worshipping in the Lutheran tradition. I have a love our Lutheran traditions, but having served as a parish pastor in multiple settings, I am acutely aware of cultural changes in our communities and churches. I believe that our Church must adapt in practical and adaptive ways to reach the lost in our communities. I bring strategic planning, clear communication, and a passion for success to help bridge the gap between these changes and theologically Lutheran heritage.

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it?

The world is changing whether we like it or not, and our greatest challenge is learning to be bold about our progressive understanding of who God is, while at the same time, adapting our Lutheran heritage to a new language of a modern culture. I would encourage congregations of the Central States Synod and their leaders, to make bold and strategic decisions to share the Gospel with our neighbors; learning their languages, their cultures, and their experiences.

Describe your leadership style. I am a hopeful pragmatist. I believe that God has invited us to participate with His mission in the world, and that scripture confirms that this mission will be triumphant. That's the hopeful part. The pragmatist in me is more concerned with participating in the mission of the Church, than the manner with which we achieve the mission. In other words, is what we are doing accomplishing what we say we are trying to do? If the answer is no, then let's find a path that does. In leadership, I look for opportunities to lift up individuals to use their gifts to enflesh God's mission into our ever changing world. My management style is to strategically select team members to achieve the same goal, wrapping all of this with clear communication and community support.

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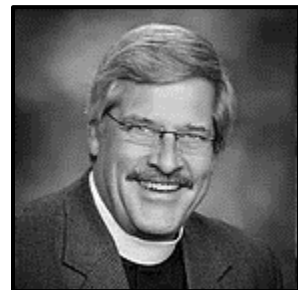
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Name: **Rev. Keith Hohly**

Current Position: Bishop's Associate, Central States Synod, since 2013

Congregation Membership: First Lutheran Church, 6400 State Line Road, Mission Hills, KS 66208

Date and Year of Ordination: 06/20/1986



Previous Positions: 1988 – 2013: Pastor, First Lutheran Church, Mission Hills, KS 1986 –

1988: Associate Pastor, First Lutheran Church, Bellefontaine, OH

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

1986 – Master of Divinity, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus,

OH 1982 – Bachelor of Arts, The University of Toledo, Toledo, OH

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

1) Current service on Bethany College's Board of Directors, since 2014 2) Six years' service on the national Board of Directors for Mosaic, an ELCA affiliated organization serving people with intellectual disabilities, 2013 – 2018, including two years as Secretary of the Board and two years as chair of Board Development 3) Nine years' service on the Hollis Renewal Center's Board of Directors, 1997 – 2006, including three years as Board Chair 4) Two terms of service on Metro Lutheran Ministries Board of Directors, including two years as Secretary of the Board 5) Six years' service as Dean of Area Ministry 7 (now the Border Conference), 1997 – 2003

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

1) Participation in various learning opportunities provided by the Kansas Leadership Center 2) Current service on the Board of Directors of the Heartland Men's Chorus, the largest men's chorus in the Kansas City area, since 2015, including the last two years as Board Chair 3) Participation in the Communities of Faith Committee of GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) when GLAAD had Kansas City offices in the 1990's

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? The primary gift I would bring to this office is the desire I have to please Christ in all that I do. In the end, this office is not about the person who holds it. It is instead about the Christ we are all called to follow and serve. The chief gift I would bring would be my commitment to following Christ in all that I do. My past six years of serving on the staff of this synod have provided me the opportunity to learn the responsibilities of the office of bishop. I have come to know many of the congregations in this synod through working with them in their pastoral transitions and leadership challenges. I see the work of this office as primarily serving the needs of our congregations in helping them be vital communities of faith. I would draw on my 27 years as a parish pastor—25 of them in one congregation—to inform seeing the work of this synod from congregation's point of view and a parish pastor's point of view. I bring the experience of quite a few years of service on boards of various organizations which have helped develop my sense of the fiduciary, strategic and generative needs of organizations and how leadership needs to attend these needs.

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? I see the principal challenge facing this synod as one of being evangelical, that is, fulfilling the charge we have always had as church to proclaim the good news in all we do and say. But the further challenge is to be evangelical in a way that is effective and relevant to the context of our day. So, it is doing old things in new ways. One of the things our declining numbers tell us is that many of the old ways of being church simply are not working anymore. Part of the challenge, then, is to do things we have not done before. But part of the challenge is also to continue to allow ourselves to be transformed by the God who loves us, and to be agents of transformation in the world that surrounds us. The goal of transformation is to be love as God is love. What we need to be telling ourselves and all around us is that God loves us just exactly as we are, but because God loves us, God does not want to leave us as we are. God is always working for us to be one with God. In this, our challenge is one of continually allowing ourselves to be transformed into the love God is. It is giving into the way of God instead of insisting on our own.

Describe your leadership style. I think of my leadership style primarily in terms of being collaborative. I do understand that, in all positions of leadership, there are times when a leader must take primary responsibility for certain things. However, in most things, I value being part of a team. In the words of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, it is about being church together. We have a greater wisdom together than any of us have on our own. We are much more likely to successfully take on the challenges before us together than we might be able to on our own. Consequently, my leadership style is to work for collaboration. Central to this is to lead by serving, to lead by listening and to lead by valuing all in the community. Following the example Jesus has shown us on how to do this, I am led to lead by serving those around who are not being served, listening to those around us who are not being heard and to value those who are not being valued. I seek to collaborate with all in the community.

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Name: **Rev. Peter W. Rehwaldt**

Current Position: Interim Pastor, St. Mark's Lutheran Church – Emporia KS

Congregation Membership: St. Mark's LC – Emporia

(First Lutheran – Mission Hills KS when between interim positions)

Date and Year of Ordination: September 3, 1989



Previous Positions: 11 interim ministry positions: St. Mark's – Emporia KS, St. Andrew's – Columbia MO, Gloria Dei – KC MO, Lord of Love – Belton MO, Trinity – Topeka KS, Faith – Prairie Village KS, Hope – San Mateo CA, St. Timothy's Episcopal – Mountain View CA, First United – SF CA, Holy Redeemer – Newark CA, Lutheran Campus Ministry at KU – Lawrence KS; also interim consultant with Reformation – Wichita KS 2 sabbatical/parental leave positions: St. Paul's – Vallejo CA and Trinity – Alameda CA Coordinator, Office of Institutional Research, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley CA (1996-2005) Adjunct Faculty at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (Berkeley CA), St. Paul School of Theology (formerly KC MO, now Leawood KS), Lutheran House of Studies (KC MO), and Training Associate with Kyros Ministry [formerly the Pastoral Center for Abuse Prevention] (San Mateo CA) 2 regular parish ministry calls: Zion – Ferguson MO and Ruskin Heights – KC MO

Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first): Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley CA (Worship, the Arts, and Proclamation), 2005. Dissertation title: Let All the People Say "Amen!": A Multigenerational Understanding of Rite, Hymnody, and Preaching Master of Divinity, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1989 Bachelor of Arts, Northwestern University, Evanston IL (Honors Program in Mathematical Methods in the Social Sciences – concentration in economics), 1985

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

1. Conflict Resolution: member of several synod "Listening Teams" that engaged in a two or three day listening process in conflicted congregations, to assist them in finding a path forward
2. Worship Leadership: member of the Hymn Editorial Panel that helped produce the hymn section of Evangelical Lutheran Worship; life member of both the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians and the Hymn Society in the US and Canada; regularly served as coordinator of synod and other major worship events
3. Teacher of Leaders: plenary presenter for Bishop's Convocation, several synod interim pastor gatherings, and a number of Hymn Society conferences
4. Board member: currently board secretary of the Hollis Renewal Center, past LSTC board member, past Hymn Society board member
5. Ecumenical Partner: worked closely with Presidents and Deans in my role as the Coordinator of the Office of Institutional Research at the Graduate Theological Union – an ecumenical consortium of 9 schools (including PLTS) and several affiliated interfaith/topical research centers (Center of Jewish Studies, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Center for Religion and the Arts, Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, etc.)

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

1. avid reader of history, politics, science fiction, poetry, and news – curious about the world around me, and the ways in which community can be made/broken/remade
2. mentor, Team Driven robotics team, Lee's Summit High School, Lee's Summit MO – assist young people in finding their voices and developing confidence in their communications skills
3. band & choir parent, Lee's Summit High School – support the work of teachers and other leaders in drawing out the musical gifts of others

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod?

- A passion for good news-bringing, centered in worship as that which makes the church the church and unites us with one another, regardless of all the differences that exist among us.
- A gift for telling the story of our church and our Lord, in such a way that the telling invites others to find their place in the story as well.
- A background of the direct practice of ministry in a wide variety of settings: small, medium, and large parishes; urban, suburban, and rural parishes; congregations with mono- and multi-cultural racial backgrounds; college town parishes and campus ministry settings; and congregations in a wide range of socio-economic settings.
- Strong experience with three important aspects of the bishop's particular ministry: the call process, conflict management, and ecumenical cooperation.
- A love of the interaction of teaching and learning, to lift up leaders to share the tasks of ministry even as I learn from those I teach.

Central States Synod 2019 Synod Assembly

Overland Park, Kan. • June 6-8

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? The synod faces many challenges like tight finances, aging members, changing social conditions, and a scarcity of pastors, but the deeper challenge we face is fear. Outside the church, loud voices stoke fear of the Other, the new, and 1000 other things. Mistrust and distrust thrive when fear runs rampant, as people feel powerless, isolated, and alone. As bishop, I would fight fear with the twin refrains of God's messengers in such times: "Do not be afraid" and "Peace be with you." Yes, there are things that scare, but in Christ we know that they are ultimately powerless. By naming them, they lose their force; by preaching peace, we are freed to find new paths. As hymnwriter John Bell put it:

Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Trusting God's presence with us, fear is banished and ministry flourishes.

Describe your leadership style. Joan Chittister wrote "Leaders must be an example to the community of its best self." As a leader, I am called to offer my best thinking and action on behalf of those I serve. At times, this means putting my own gifts forward; at other times it means calling forth the gifts of others. I am thrilled to discover the gifts that others offer, and delight in encouraging them to share their gifts more widely. My leadership style is to be collaborative and above board, clarifying mixed expectations and sorting out unspoken assumptions that all too often derail things.

Chittister also wrote "The leader must maintain the integrity of the community and encourage it to be what it is meant to be." This requires listening to the community, both to what is said and what is not said, as well as listening to the Holy Spirit's guidance. The encouragement requires both being organized (having agendas, plans, etc.) and being flexible enough to take advantage of new opportunities.

Name: Rev. Jennifer J. Thomas

Current Position: Alumni and Church Engagement Manager,

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Chicago, IL (deployed in Shawnee, KS)

Congregation Membership: Salem Lutheran Church, Lenexa, KS

Date and Year of Ordination: July 26, 1998



Previous Positions: Senior Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Kansas City, MO, 2007-2014

Pastor / Outreach Pastor, Lake Park Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, WI, 1998-2007

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

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

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

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? 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.

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

Describe your leadership style. 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.