

Bishop Election Discussion Rocky Mountain Synod Conference Gatherings

Who Are We?

1. How have you experienced, or how would you like to experience the “Better Together” connection with the synod and your congregation or ministry site?

Support

During transition/pastor’s illness/call process

COVID guidance

Interim training

Liaison with the ELCA

Funding and grants

Presence following Marshall Fire

Partnership

Stronger relationships between congregations

Office of the Bishop staff in congregations

Joint conference worship

Including prayers for other congregations on Sundays

Collaboration

Vision of joint mission in the world

Synod-wide programs: Excellence in Leadership; Stewardship for All Seasons; Vital Right-Sized Ministry; Companion Synod; Border Servant Corp; God’s Work. Our Hands

Outdoor ministries

With ecumenical partners

Synod Assembly

Shared ministry with nearby congregations

Would like more synod educational events

More sharing of ideas between congregations

Communication

EConnection

More information on our values and goals; more information getting to laypeople

Comments:

Need to manage expectations of what the Bishop/Office of the Bishop can do

Help living out “Better Together” in congregations

We need more contact with the Office of the Bishop for those outside Colorado

We aren’t sure what “Better Together” is

We are concerned about the lack of connectedness for small congregations in mountain/rural areas

We need to learn to trust one another so “pruning” of ministry isn’t so scary

2, What are three hopes you have for the Rocky Mountain Synod in the next six years?

Innovation/Adaption/Creativity

Bold leadership and clear vision; looking forward, not back

Consistent message of the Gospel

Finding different ways to be the church together, especially outside the church walls

Being willing to let go and risk

Trusting the Holy Spirit's guidance

Encouraging inclusivity

Transitions in congregations paid more attention to

Right-size the synod and the Office of the Bishop staff

Every congregation doesn't have to do everything

Youth and young adult connections; the church helping them navigate a polarized world

Evangelism in the current landscape

Connection

Better communication with the synod and other congregations

Ecumenical partnerships continued and strengthened

Using Zoom/other digital platforms

Individuals take responsibility to connect to the synod

Lay leadership empowerment

Classes/learning opportunities

Lift up new voices and leaders

Financial Stability

Balanced budget

Transparency and stewardship of resources

Social Justice Emphasis

Involvement with refugees, unhoused, those on the margins, priority of diversity and equity

Alliances with LGBTQ

Use underutilized buildings for outreach to communities

Force for good outside church walls

Embody antiracist behavior—visible advocacy for these issues

Comments:

We need to get back to Biblical teaching

Stability in the Office of the Bishop

We need to have courage over fear

Hopes that a Lutheran identity would be less associated with heritage and more identified as transformative and life-giving.

3. Where do you see God's Spirit at work or leading the Rocky Mountain Synod?

Adaptation

Openness to new ideas

We are rooted in the Holy Spirit

Excellence in Leadership changes leaders and congregations in positive ways

When we get outside of our physical buildings and toward relationships and service

New ways of organizing and structuring the synod

A synod that is willing to innovate, willing to try

Asking hard questions and "pruning" ministries

Having an attitude of generosity, not scarcity

Leading into the future and not the past

Discerning what's ahead and acting on it

Connection

Interfaith engagement

Partnerships between congregations

Young leaders/pastors from the LGBTQIA community

With ecumenical partners

When we listen to one another

More frequent conference gatherings

Social Justice

Border advocacy and ministry

Listening to the many languages around us

Increased care for equity and inclusion and the LGBTQ community

Serving our neighbors

Anti-racism and repudiation of the doctrine of discovery

Comments:

When we dive deeply into God's Word

We need to listen to how we are being called to share the Gospel

"We don't see the Spirit at work in the synod."

4. What are some areas of growth that are needed in the synod?

Financial Stability

Clarity, transparency, good management of funds/resources
Expanded travel budgets to allow synod staff to be where they are needed
Developing generosity in congregations

Communication

From churchwide to synod to congregations
An increased timeliness of materials received
Explaining what the role of the synod is to congregations
Sharing stories of ministries in congregations, etc. over and over
Sharing materials between congregations, ex: Personnel manuals, treasurer tasks
Interdependence of congregations—partnerships with one another

Faith formation

Support for campus ministries and ministries with young adults
Faith growth across the generations
Being Christian first and Lutheran second
Youth events held synod-wide again
Help for forming small group ministries
Discovering the joy of Jesus!

Management

Diversity of staff in the Office of the Bishop
Synod staff carefully selected for their gifts and what is needed for the synod

Leadership development

For laypeople in small and rural congregations
Spanish speaking rostered leaders
For all laypeople so they can be effective leaders in their congregations

Vision and Discernment

Transforming ministries of congregations with synod support
Overcome the perception that the Office of the Bishop is “in charge” of the synod
More external focus
Extending support to those people who are on the margins
Are we a social club, or are we here to serve God?
Evangelism and welcoming new people

5. What should be the primary priorities for the synod's ministry in the next six years?

Relational

Encouraging calls and training for pastors and deacons
Have difficult conversations with facets of the church that are not thriving
Getting congregations together to share resources and experiences
Empower the laity to lead in their congregations/communities
Caring for the vulnerable
Sharing joy in times of stress
Embracing change together
Support congregations making difficult decisions
Manage expectations for what the synod can do
God's Word needs to come first
Office of the Bishop know each congregation and their 'culture'
Evangelism and reaching out to people

Resources

Transformational worship and faith formation ideas
A hub for best practices in congregations
Leadership support and information for lay leaders—Presidents, Treasurers, etc.
Excellence in Leadership
Use of the TEEM program (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) to raise up leaders

Justice

Care for the planet and for vulnerable people
Having a public ministry/advocacy
Not being political

Identity

New models of church that move away from a "cultural" church
Believe that God is active in our communal lives
Trusting the Holy Spirit

Faith formation

For all ages
Support for campus ministry

Administrative

Financial stability and sustainability
Transparency of the budget
Consistent staffing in the Office of the Bishop
Transitions in congregations better accompanied
Redefine conference boundaries
Update compensation guidelines for rostered leaders

6. What are the gifts the synod brings to your congregation or ministry site?

Resources

Excellence in Leadership, Stewardship for All Seasons, Vital Right-Sized Ministry
EConnection
Immersion opportunities
New models for ministry from the ELCA
Help with transitions and call process
How to approach larger issues, like anti-racism
Ecumenical partnerships

Relationship

Healthy rostered leaders/support of rostered leaders
The energy of the Bishop
Our Lutheran teachings of grace
Partnerships with other congregations and people
Mission focus that encourages us to work with others in the region and ecumenically
Someone to listen to struggles in congregations and offer support and advice
Campus ministry
Outdoor ministry

Advocacy

Border Servant Corps
Issues that are communicated to congregations and their committees

Whom Do We Seek?

1. What gifts or characteristics are most desired or most helpful for the next bishop?

Faith

An abiding faith in Christ

Asks what God is doing now

A passion for the Gospel

Love for God's Word

A servant leader

A contagious faith that draws others in

Solid in scripture and theology

"Walks the Talk"

Embodies transformative faith

Shares their own faith practices

Emotional Intelligence

A good listener

Can struggle with hard questions

Accepting

Ready to acknowledge the grief of the past and experiment

Can fail and also course correct

Tough skin

A good sense of humor

An ability to incorporate what is happening outside the church into conversation and vision

Compassionate

Transparent

Flexible

Committed to learning

Intentional

Can hear criticism and feedback

Knows own weaknesses and hires staff to compensate and balance

Conflict management skills

Gifted in skills that serve the church

Organized

Can think outside the box

Extensive experience in a parish/has been part of a staff team

Has energy for change

Administrator/manager/teacher

Delegates

Willingness to travel

Values ecumenism

Sees beyond what is to what could be

Justice Commitment

For all people

Border ministry/immigration

Understanding of anti-racism movement

Relational

Open to mutual accountability

Bilingual would be a plus

Loves people/loves the Church

A leader who listens deeply

Has no private agenda

2. What words would you hope to hear from a bishop about their vision or priorities?

“We are in this together”

“I’m with you, we’ll work together”

“I don’t have all the answers”

“I’m listening”

“I’ve prayerfully considered”

“We are enough”

Passion for the Gospel and for the weak and powerless

Grounded in the Holy Spirit and following God’s Word

Clear and concise

Openness to the future

Honest but honoring

Hope

Enthusiasm

Lay empowerment and training

Seeking diverse candidates for leadership and staffing

A love of diversity

Bravery

Biblically versed over constitutionally versed

Ways to grow congregations, reach the wider community

Gifts of the Spirit: grace, love, joy, patience, kindness, peace, gentleness, and self-control

3. How would you envision a bishop serving our large geographical area?

Deployed staff, delegate to them—choose Office of the Bishop staff where they live already

Accept that the bishop can’t be everywhere; choose staff that are equally gifted and competent

Divide the synod territory into smaller synods

More reliance on the conference deans

Use tools like Zoom

Hold gatherings for specific groups within the synod

Synod/bishop RV

Strengthen ecumenical partnerships in each state

Visit each congregation during their first term

Get to know the congregations, their settings, challenges and joys

Bonus Question (from Cheyenne site): How can we really screw this up?

- Not pray enough
- Not let the Holy Spirit lead
- Think this is a campaign rather than led by God
- Forget to put mission and vision first
- Believe the new bishop will fix everything without us changing or helping
- Not having youth/young people involved
- Think we have all the answers