***This document is a compilation of comments and discussion among rostered leaders attending the Rocky Mountain Synod Theological Conference September 17-20, 2023.***

**Part One: Who are we?**

1. How have you experienced or how would you like to experience the “Better Together” connectedness of the Rocky Mountain Synod within your congregation (or ministry site) and your own leadership?

Collaboration

Youth ministry and programs

Outdoor Ministry

Advocacy

Campus Ministry

Synod-Wide Programs and Gatherings

Vital Right-Sized Ministry Synod Assembly

Excellence in Leadership Shared worship services

Stewardship for All Seasons

Racial Justice Workshop

Theological Conference

Bishop and Office of the Bishop Staff

Help with logistics

Conversations—connecting in-person and by phone

Responsive and helpful

Deployed staff would help us

Ecumenical Partnerships

Comments:

My congregation feels cared for, not alone

We need more connection and support

EConnection is a great resource!

Would like more positivity and openness to congregations not on the Front Range

More transparency is needed

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

Innovation/Adaption/Creativity

Bold leadership Witness to Christ in changing landscape

Improved transition process Plan more than react

More focus on youth and young people Transparency

Open to new possibilities in congregation and in the synod

Nimbleness

Staffing in the Office of the Bishop—staying power/transparency in call to serve in Office of the Bishop

Financial Stability

Social Justice Emphasis

Priority of racial justice work

A distinctive Lutheran voice on issues facing communities

Lay leadership development

Comments:

That the new Bishop have a pastor’s heart

That we would all be less fearful of what lies ahead for the Church

The Bishop being present regularly, especially in small communities

That we act and believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church

1. Where do you see God’s Spirit leading the Rocky Mountain Synod?

Connection

With colleagues, in communities, and with ecumenical partners

Excellence in Leadership program,

Challenging the leadership norms in the Church

With diverse groups of people

Adaptation

The ways smaller and geographically separated congregations are adapting and continuing to nurture live of faith

Embrace of Deacons as leaders

Development of lay leaders

Helping there be death and resurrection in institutions and congregations

Doing less better

Structure

Deployed Office of the Bishop staff

Divide the Synod into smaller geographical synods

1. What are some areas of growth that are needed in the Rocky Mountain Synod?

Financial Stability

Partnerships

Ecumenical

Keep developing and equipping lay leaders

Communication

Help for first call pastors navigating congregations

Get “Church Becoming” and ideas like it down to the pews

Between congregations

Build trust and transparency

Vision and Discernment

Do fewer programs better

Be more actively inclusive

Focus on what it is that we are called to do

Diversity of rostered leaders, members of congregations and worship attenders

Comments:

Lower our fossil fuel footprint as a synod

Need resources for valuing elders

The call process with coaches remains inconsistent

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

Relational

Support and education for lay leaders—Excellence in Leadership for lay leaders

Deployed synod staff

More synodically authorized ministers

Ecumenical partnerships

Listening to one another

Assessment of what congregations need (not just the highly visible ones)

Evangelism

Equip congregations in their ministry

Identity

Diversity lifted up and emphasized, expand Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In changing landscape, what is God calling us to be?

Grow in spiritual process and faith

Be Spirit-driven

Administrative

Vital Right Sized Ministry at the Office of the Bishop and Synod level

Synod staff who are gifted and reflect synod priorities

Financial stability

Improvement of transition process

Examine the burden of property and building as restrictions to ministry

1. What are the gifts that the synod brings to your congregation/ministry site for the sake of your ministry, your community, or the world?

Resources

New ideas

Church Becoming, Stewardship for All Seasons, Vital Right-Sized Ministry

ELCA Social Statements

God’s Work. Our Hands

Guidance for racial justice

Financial help and grants

Excellence in Ministry

Relationship

Visits from the Bishop and the Office of the Bishop staff

Leadership, especially during the pandemic

Understanding *we* are the church, *we* are the synod

Accountability and anchoring

The message of grace for all

Connections: ELCA, camps, border work, missionaries, LIRS, LWR, etc.

**Part Two: Whom do we seek?**

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

Faith

Prayerful Courage rooted in the promises of God

A friend of Jesus Prophetic

Enthusiasm for the Gospel of Christ Can articulate engagement with scripture and

Grounded in Christ how it intersects with real life

Centered

Has personal spiritual practices

Emotional Intelligence

Can make hard decisions Appropriate vulnerability

Willing to listen and to be direct Can manage conflict

Discerning Not afraid to fail

Self-aware Not rattled by change

Humility—willingness to say “I don’t know.” A good listener

Honest

Patient

Visionary

Thick skin

Has done their own work re: racial justice and privilege

Gifted in Skills that Serve the Church

Excellent preaching and writing skills Encourages development of lay leaders

Honors appointments

Manages time

Ten years+ parish experience

Administrator and Manager

Communicator across various platforms, including social media

A team player that encourages the gift of others, both own staff and wider community

Encourages sharing of resources

Fiscally attentive

Track record with successful stewardship program in congregation/ministry site

Leads budgeting that reflects synod priorities and vision

Transparency around how money is spent in the synod

Relational

With rostered leaders, commitment to their renewal

Inclusive; commitment to diversity and supporting diverse communities

Commitment to justice

Present in challenging times

With ecumenical partners

Is an example of self-care

Enthusiasm that moves others to join the journey

Holds congregations accountable to their ministry and their care of rostered leaders

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

Christ-centered Love

Hopeful Investment in young people

Inclusivity Creative ways to be the Office of the Bishop

People over property Forward moving

Change Humility

Risk Lift up gifts of lay leaders

Accompaniment

Encouragement

Partner

“Can we imagine together?”

“I have a plan to balance the budget.”

“My staff will balance my weaknesses and bring broader gifts.”

“Here’s what I do to stay spiritually healthy…”

“My staff will be reliable and transparent.”

1. How would you envision a bishop serving our large geographical synod?

Use deployed staff in the Office of the Bishop Get a synodical RV

Use conference deans more and empower them

Communication must be a priority

Innovate/Experiment

Use virtual tools—Teams, Zoom, etc.

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

[This Photo](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mijustin/9343512181) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)

Believe the new bishop will fix everything without us changing or helping

Not having youth/young people involved

Think we have all the answers