



2020 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM:

Pastor identified as possessing the gifts for the office of

BISHOP OF THE SIERRA PACIFIC SYNOD

1. Name:
2. Current Position:
3. Congregational Membership:
4. Date of Birth:
5. Date and Year of Ordination:

6. Previous Positions:

Professor of Biblical Studies and Director of the Center for Church Life, Auburn Seminary, New York, NY
Minister for Education (Interim), Riverside Church, New York, NY
Associate Professor of New Testament, Union Theological Seminary, New York, NY
Facilities Manager and Community Life Coordinator, Yale University Divinity School
Mental Health Worker, Yale-New Haven Hospital
Property Manager, Urban Search Management, Chicago, IL
Developmental Learning Instructor, Prospectus Associates, Colmar, PA
Co-Owner, Schultz-Weidmann Painting Company, Bronxville, NY

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

Interim Ministry Certificate, Interim Ministry Network, 2005
Ph.D. New Testament and Ancient Christianity, Yale University, 1993
M.Div. Yale University, 1988
Studied at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1984-86
B. A. English Literature, Muhlenberg College, 1983

8. List up to three (3) current or past synod or churchwide experiences that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

NOTE: Given my current position--Senior Minister of a congregation of the United Church of Christ (UCC)--I include one UCC experience:

Regular Attendee, Professional Leaders Conferences, 2012 - current

Workshop Leader, "Can we Talk?: Racism," Annual Gathering of the Northern California Nevada Conference UCC, June 17, 2016

Lecturer and Workshop Leader on Scripture and Homosexuality (and related topics) at several congregations and conference-wide events in the Metropolitan New York Synod of the ELCA, late 1990's - early 2000's

9. List up to three (3) current or past community activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

NOTE--Given the nature of my role as "Director of the Center for Church Life" at Auburn Seminary in New York, I think it is appropriate and important to include that here:

Dean, Pleasant Hill Clergy Group, 2014 - current

Co-Facilitator of the Faith Leaders Advisory Board and Steering Committee Member, Multifaith Action Coalition

Founding Director of the Professional Coaching Program, developed and facilitated conferences for clergy and church leaders, and consulted with several congregations, judicatories, and individual clergy, Auburn Seminary

10. What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

*Experience as Senior Minister of a congregation

*Experience coaching and consulting with church leaders

*Experience in ecumenical and multifaith work, and community service

*Experience with budgets and goals and decision making processes within several (types of) institutions

*Training, teaching, research and writing in early Christian formation

It takes effort to understand different peoples and different expressions of faith—then and now. There is joy in the effort! In my preaching, teaching, community service, and leadership on all levels, I value—and teach the value of—crossing of boundaries. It's how we grow; it's how we support others in growing. It's how we heal. It's how we love

* All the experiences, love, and growth shared in and with churches and church-related institutions. Put another way, formation from womb through childhood through college and seminary, through raising my own children, and through the current day

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

Collegial—leading and serving “with.”

It’s what Jesus did and what and how he calls us to be: “children of God,” working together to take up God’s call. It’s what the earliest hymn that we have shows us. In the lead up to the Christ Hymn in Philippians 2 St. Paul urges us to have the “same mind among” ourselves that Christ had.

By suggesting Jesus Christ as a model for “leadership style” am I rashly putting myself in the place of Jesus? No. What I hope to be doing is biblically suggesting that we understand ourselves, together, in the place of Jesus and work closely together. That’s what Jesus models. That’s the leadership I work, and play, to bring.

12. Describe your discernment process in being open to serving as bishop of this synod. (1,000 characters maximum)

*Prayer

And I ask of you--please pray for our candidates and Synod.

*Discussions with family and colleagues

I am blessed that the first was with one who is both (I am married to a pastor in our Synod). In all discussions the deep love and care expressed for our Synod’s people and ministries has moved me.

*Taking Stock: How well would all I bring fit?

Not well—

I haven’t served as a called pastor in a Lutheran setting.

As a straight, white male I embody over-representation and privilege.

Well—

I am rooted in, formed by, and active within Lutheran settings and have significant professional experiences in other settings.

I have significant experience working with and across difference in ministry.

Our denomination teaches that discernment is about “being open, curious and attuned to what God is up to—with you and with your community” and “being confident that you have a part to play in the story of God’s love for the world.” That’s work I value being a part of—for all.

13. 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)

Turning Outward.

- It's Better for Us

Our Synod profile references "anxiety" about the future. That anxiety can lead to turning in on ourselves (a move that Luther used to define sin) and lose the bigger picture. A sure answer how not to ease anxiety and fix systemic challenges and felt threats to the Synod is to turn inward.

Doing what we do for impact in the world is honest, keeps us focused on being who God calls us to be, and moves us from anxiety to health.

- It's Better for the World

The world needs us. Is that a silly? Megalomaniacal? Presumptuous? Well, listen to the cries of the world. And now listen to so many who speak in the name of Christ and Christianity. Still think the world doesn't need us?

For our health, for the health of the world, and for God's call to mission, I would ask us to check our tendency to want to bring the world in to us, and challenge us to be out in the world.

14. What are your top 3 priorities for this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

My goal would be to structure a process for gathering input and buy-in (literally and figuratively) to answer the question, what are our top 3 priorities. That said, here are mine:

- A Missional Structure

Let's not settle for what we know, or think we must have. Let's ask what needs to be accomplished and addressed.

- A Budget for Structure, Mission, and Values
- Working and Playing Together

Working and playing are not opposites. From "Laughter Lends Itself to Praise" by Dan Damon:

Laughter lends itself to praise,
bringing healing from within,
Hope will surely rise again,
As laughter lends itself to praise.
Laughter leaps into the void,
Dancing with the Spirit there,
All the signs that God is near
Say laughter lends itself to praise.

I urge us to leap forward in mission together trusting that the Spirit is there, and God is near, as we move into unfamiliar spaces. AMEN.

Please submit the completed 2020 Biographical Information Form along with a digital photo by emailing the Sierra Pacific Synod Nominating Committee at nominations@spselca.org no later than February 1, 2020. Forms will be posted publicly on the Sierra Pacific Synod website (www.spselca.org) in spring 2020 six weeks prior to the Synod Assembly.

