



SYNOD SITE PROFILE 2019 SUMMARY

The Sierra Pacific Synod is one of great diversity in many respects. It encompasses the densely populated San Francisco Bay, greater Sacramento and Fresno areas and the more sparsely populated California coast, northern valley, Sierra foothills and Nevada. The general Reno area has the highest population in northern Nevada where we stretch across to include the city of Elko in the east. We have significant numbers of homeless people in our territory even while we also contain 4 of the top 15 wealthiest counties in the US. This Synod is home to some 6,500 tech industry firms, including Google, Apple, Facebook, and Intel among others as well as rich agricultural regions in the central valleys which grow more than 15% of the country's produce. Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union are also on the territory of this synod and provide opportunities for students to learn from many denominational and interfaith disciplines.

The total area of the Synod is 172,000 square miles, with 96,000 square miles containing congregations. The Sierra Pacific Synod consists of 180 organized congregations, 3 congregations under development and 7 Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities within the geographic region of Northern and Central California and Northern Nevada. Based on parochial reports submitted for 2017-2018, these congregations represent 36,850 and 27,523 baptized and confirmed members respectively. Total weekly worship attendance in the Synod was 13,860, giving an average attendance of 76. Eighty percent of the congregations in the Sierra Pacific Synod have 100 people or less in worship on Sunday mornings.

Using information from the 2018 parochial reports, our congregational members are 86.9% Caucasian, 3.95 % Hispanic/Latino, 3.13 % Asian Pacific Islander, 2.67% African American/Black, 2.01 % multi-racial, 0.39% Arab/Middle Eastern, .28% African National/African Caribbean and .21% American Indian/Alaskan Native. While the current census numbers are not available, the ethnic diversity of most communities is underrepresented in our congregations.

The reporting congregations indicated that worship services are offered in American sign language (3), Swahili (1), Finnish (1), Hmong (1), German (1), Oromo (1), Spanish (4) and English (90).

The Sierra Pacific Synod and 43 of its congregations are *Reconciling in Christ* –inviting and welcoming to full participation and affirming God's love for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

MISSION STATEMENT

WE ARE:

People **called** together by the insistent urging of the Holy Spirit, **empowered** to be followers of Jesus Christ, **rooted** in God's unconditional love.

WE HOPE:

- to **embody** the love of God
- to **share** the good news of Jesus
- to **equip** one another as followers of Jesus
- to **engage** in God's call for peace through justice

- to **challenge** communities of faith
- to **honor** their past and adapt for their future
- to **build** inclusive communities

WE WILL:

Live in community

Worshiping, Praying, Serving, Being fed

Honor

Lutheran identity, Questions and doubts, A spectrum of experiences

Proclaim in word and deed

God's love, Radical hospitality, Truth to power

Strive for peace and justice locally and globally

Recognize needs, Accompany, Advocate, Serve and be served

Commit to being re-formed

PROCESS

In 2018, the Synod Council appointed a Task Force to develop a “Ministry Site Profile” for the synod. This document’s purpose is to give those who feel that God is calling them to be open to consider serving as our synod’s bishop an picture of (1) who we are as a synod, (2) some of the opportunities and challenges that are present, as well as (3) the characteristics, qualities and abilities we as a synod seek in a bishop.

The results of a questionnaire completed by six hundred fifty seven respondents are summarized below. More detailed data can be viewed on Data Summary Sheets available on this website.

The Task Force consisted of two members of the Synod Council and two members of the Synod Nominating Committee: Rev. Clark Brown, Sheela Boddu, Rev. Adisa Armand and Pat Cash

DATA SUMMARY

In tallying the responses to the questionnaire by topic, the following was observed.

During the **next six years**, respondents looked for improved connectivity between the Office of the Bishop and among congregations within the synod. With respect to the **call process**, options for struggling congregations and well qualified interims topped the list. When asked in what areas congregations desired more **training and resources for ministry**, poverty and immigration were important social issues. Spiritual renewal, serving and relating to their local context, reversing congregational decline and ministry for small congregations were ranked highly. Learning more about Anti-racism and cultural diversity were also of significant importance.

Those who replied to the survey saw many **attributes** important for the next bishop. Leadership skills, vision for the future in leading a declining church to new vitality, and support and encouragement for rostered leaders topped the list. Closely behind were commitment to Anti-racism and the ability to speak clearly and boldly and communicate the mission.

Questions related to what the Bishop can expect from congregations were ineffectively posed and the data not utilized in this summary.

RANKING

The primary weakness in the survey was that every question received overwhelmingly positive response, making it difficult to see which areas are the most pressing concerns overall.

The majority of questions on the synod survey asked respondents to rate the topic on a range from

Unimportant to Very Important. For this ranking, each question received points for responses as follows: unimportant = 0; moderately unimportant = 1; neutral = 2; moderately important = 3; and very important = 4. (See example and note below.) After totaling point values for all questions in this format, they were ranked from most points to least points.

The ranking of the survey responses is illuminating because it more clearly shows a trend. Here are the top ten questions from greatest importance to least importance.

Summary of Ranking

Q18 Options for Struggling Congregations

Q52 Leadership Skills

Q16 Well-Qualified Interims

Q43 Vision for the Future - To Lead a Declining Church into Renewed Vitality

Q45 Ability to Communicate Mission

Q42 Spiritual Renewal

Q57 Support & Encouragement of Pastors/Rostered Ministers

Q47 Speak with Boldness & Clarity

Q48 Person of Prayer & Spiritual Discipline

Q53 Conflict Management Skills

In this ranking, questions from two general categories are most heavily represented: congregational struggles and qualities of the bishop. Overall, there appears to be **a strong desire for renewal, especially spiritual renewal and effective leadership**

The survey seems to indicate that respondents feel anxiety about the future of their congregations and the church in general, especially during times of pastoral transition. Indeed, there may be a recognition that we are in an era of constant transition and that effective, spiritually-centered leadership is more important now than ever.

Example of tabulation (using a question not on the questionnaire):

“The bishop should always wear purple.”

Responses:

Unimportant: $35 * 0 = 0$

Moderately unimportant: $25 * 1 = 25$

Neutral: $75 * 2 = 150$

Moderately important: $100 * 3 = 300$

Very important $40 * 4 = 160$

Total: $0+25+150+300+160 = 635$ points

Note: We want to acknowledge that there are different ways that the scores could be weighted. First, this calculation used the raw scores rather than percentages. A non-answer is not included in the percentages, but a non-answer can be interpreted as an answer of sorts. Using the raw response number reflects that more accurately. Further, since most people answered all questions there is not a significant difference in any case.

For more detailed data please download the two documents [Ranking](#) and [Data Summary](#).