



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:

Pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Dorado, Puerto Rico (2002-2004), Pastor of Apostles' Lutheran Church in Turnersville, NJ (2005-2018), Associate Pastor for Spanish Ministries at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lodi, CA (2018-Present), President of the Association of Hispanic Ministries in the ELCA (2007-2009), ELCA Church Wide Council Advisor (2007-2009), Adjunct Professor of Bible at Wartburg Seminary (2014-2016), New Jersey Synod Immigration Task Force Member (2007-2018), New Jersey Synod LGBTQ Task Force Member (2009-2018), New Jersey Synod South West Cluster of Churches Counselor (2014-2018), Gloucester County New Jersey-Ministerium Association (2005-2018), Faith in the Valley (2018-Present), Living Lutheran Contributor (2017-Present), Sierra Central Valley Conference Dean (2018-Present).

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

Currently doing a Doctor in Ministry degree in Latinx Homiletics and Leadership from Garret Evangelical Theological Seminary and will graduate in 2021. Sacred Theology Master in Hebrew Scriptures from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 2007. Master in Divinity from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 2002 (Graduated with Honors and with a certificate in Latinx ministries). Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from the Polytechnic University in Puerto Rico in 1996.

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

1. President of the ELCA's Association of Hispanic Ministries (by virtue of this office I was one of the Advisors of the Church Wide Council).
2. Member of the New Jersey Synod's Justice and Peace Committee (I was also a member of the Immigration Task Force, Anti-Racism Task Force, and LGBTQ Task Force who were part of this committee).
3. Sierra Central Valley Conference Dean (I held a similar position in the New Jersey Synod as Cluster Counselor).

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

1. I coordinated and mediated a meeting between parents of Special Needs Students and the Lodi Unified School District. The problem was that parents of Special Needs students were not receiving appropriate translation during their IEP's (Individualized Education Program). We mobilized the whole community and looked for support from local businesses and organizations to do a community town hall where the members of the School District were invited to attend and answer the questions and concerns from the parents. St. Paul Lutheran Church was the hub where this communal effort was launched. More than 150 people attended the town hall, which was celebrated at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lodi. The parents publicly recognized before the whole community my role in raising awareness and making possible the event through my support and advocacy.
2. Along with the Mexican Consulate in Sacramento, the 100 amigos Mexican American support group, and members of the Latinx community in Lodi, we were able to convince the city of Lodi to provide school district students free public transportation. The Lodi Unified School District does not provide bus service to most students. Low income kids had to walk up to 3 miles through the city, sometimes facing sexual harassment and crime infested areas, plus the weather.
3. I planned and coordinated a joint worship service celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification by faith with Father Misael Avila from St. Frances of Rome Roman Catholic Church in Riverbank, CA at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lodi on October 29th, 2019.

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

I believe that my experience in multicultural ministries and inclusivity is the most important gift that I can bring to the office of bishop. Having served in Puerto Rico, the United States, and in both coasts, has given me a broader perspective about ministry. Also, as a person of color that is fluent in both Spanish and English, that has served both Latinx and Anglo congregations, I am equipped to bridge gaps and create lines of communications between cultures. Moreover, my parish ministry experience of reaching communities of color has given me the expertise to lead this Synod in growing its membership. Our Synod is in a region where multicultural expertise is necessary for any faith community that wants to grow. In other words, I have the experience and the know-how that our synod needs in order to reach communities that historically have not been part of the Lutheran Church.

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

I believe in communal leadership. Leadership is not an individualistic endeavor. As I minister among migrants from Mexico in California's Central Valley, I have learned from the leaders of this community how to lead along with them. Back when I was a Motorola Engineer in the late 1990's, I learned that the best way to run a production line was to listen to the workers who saw the process more closely than I ever did. Humility is the key word. Delegation and trust in the faith community allows the leader to lead not from afar, but from within. Leadership is not about wielding power, but providing a vision that arises from within the community of faith. That vision needs to be informed by Scripture, our context, theology, Lutheran tradition, and a commitment to the liberation of every human being.

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

Given the historical moment in which we live, and since our synod contains the three most diverse cities in the nation, having a bishop that can reach cross culturally is of the utmost importance for the mission of the church. As a bilingual and bicultural Bishop, I could be a bridge between cultures and be an approachable leader given my Latinx background. Moreover, I believe since I have served in English Speaking congregations as well as Spanish Speaking ones, I have the skills to truly guide our synod in becoming even more inclusive and multicultural. God has always led me to congregations where barriers have been erected and there is a need to open gateways for the community to be part of the church, and the church be part of the community. Having that gift, along with the wisdom of my colleagues and the lay leadership of our synod, we could build the potential and capacity for effective mission and outreach.

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)

The biggest challenge for the Sierra Pacific Synod will be threefold; mission, numerical growth, and resource allocation to make it happen. According to the Research and Evaluation office of the ELCA, the Sierra Pacific Synod has 119 congregations that are declining, 18 that are stable and 34 that are growing (21 congregations did not share their data). This reality will require a serious conversation about the kind of pastoral leadership and congregational redevelopment needed to reverse the declining. We need to train leaders and congregations to reach out cross culturally. Monocultural and monolingual leaders and models will not suffice. Training existing pastors and lay leaders in cross cultural ministry will generate the capacity and leadership needed to change this negative trend. For example, the ELCA's Presiding Bishop is promoting the use of the Anchor Church model to build capacity and interdependency among congregation so that they can share resources and staff.

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

1. Justice and Outreach - Allocating resources and personnel in developing partnerships throughout the synod between congregations and community organizations are essential for the church of the 21st century. The energy in our region among young people and the unchurched is in social justice work and the renewal of our society. The church needs to be a catalyst for social change by providing a prophetic word to dismantle injustice and the Gospel to give hope and forgiveness as we struggle for the values of the Kin-dom of God..
2. Stewardship - We can energize our synodical stewardship by doing justice and outreach training for congregations.
3. Interfaith and Ecumenical Relations - Improve and foster our relationship with our full communion partners in matters of mission, collaboration and justice work. I would strongly promote justice work with other faith traditions and joint interfaith worship services as signs of peaceful co-existence between different religions.

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.

