



Northeastern Minnesota Synod's 2020 Bishop Election Survey Summary

1. How has synod leadership assisted your congregation in the past few years?

- ❖ **Pastoral transitions, interim ministry, and call processes:** Nearly half of the respondents noted this important connection to the synod.
- ❖ **Long-range planning assistance:** Stewardship or mission planning, exploration of ministry collaboration or area partnerships, and guidance on constitutions and compensation guidelines were mentioned frequently.
- ❖ **Resources to develop and sustain healthy, vibrant congregations:** Synod leadership is viewed as providing valuable support, workshops and continuing education in the areas of youth ministry, care and support of pastors and congregations, mission and outreach, the candidacy process, and training church leaders.
- ❖ **Direct communication:** Respondents expressed appreciation for in-person visits, on-line communication, and synod assembly gatherings.

2. In what ways can the synod leadership be a partner in addressing the future issues and needs of your region and context?

- ❖ **Relationships with congregations:** Responses overwhelmingly expressed a continued need for strong, listening-centered relationships between synod leadership and congregations. Emphases included synod visibility, theological communication, educational tools and trainings, congregational assistance, and adult and youth programming.
- ❖ **Exploring vibrant/creative ways to do ministry in a changing culture:** Respondents articulated a need for creative ways of being church throughout the synod. Changing culture and declining demographics underlie an articulated need for synod leadership to help congregations explore new ministry partnerships and collaborations for congregational vitality and ministry.
- ❖ **Pastoral Vacancies:** Challenges in filling pastoral vacancies, gaining interim ministers in transition, affordability to call a pastor, and raising up seminarians were strong themes. Respondents expressed wishes to re-imagine and explore new ways to provide pastoral leadership to congregations.
- ❖ **Justice Issues:** Respondents expressed a need for synod leadership to partner with congregations to theologically understand and address justice issues locally and globally. Issues related to food and housing insecurities, chemical dependency, mental health, immigration, Native American reconciliation, racism, violence, and environmental care were common.

3. What are the greatest mission opportunities for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod in the next six years?

- ❖ **Outreach and empowerment of members and congregations:** Both new and existing members were often mentioned in responses.
- ❖ **Outreach to those who may feel marginalized in society:** Accompaniment of those on their faith journey, ministry with refugees and migrants, reconciliation with Native American and LGBTQ communities, and ministry with youth and young adults were also response areas.
- ❖ **Health and wholeness:** Health care, housing and the homeless, the environment, hunger, drug use, and mental health were mentioned by several respondents.

4. What do you want the Northeastern Minnesota Synod to be known for?

- ❖ **A welcoming, inclusive, compassionate synod for all people.**
An overwhelming number of respondents expressed their desire for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod to be a welcoming synod for all people. Respondents also expressed their wishes for robust outreach in our communities, vibrant congregations with solid missional presence locally and globally, visible Lutheran witness and evangelism, strong lay and pastoral leadership in congregations, and a boldness for innovation and creativity into the future.

5. What are the 2-3 biggest challenges that await the next Bishop?

- ❖ Embracing and encouraging faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and promoting adaptability in leadership in accordance with the teachings and constitution of this church
- ❖ Balancing the administrative, organizational, and pastoral care responsibilities for both the synod and wider church, including conflict resolution, long-range organizational planning, and financial vitality.
- ❖ Engaging leaders and congregations to assist in strengthening faith formation and developing vision toward adaptive ordained and lay ministry, especially in the context of a church experiencing a declining and aging membership with limited resources.
- ❖ Partnering with congregations and leaders in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ in our congregations and in our communities, especially among those on fringes.

6. What are the top three to four gifts and skills you are looking for in the next Bishop?

- ❖ **Administration / organization / teamwork as well as welcoming / compassionate and inclusive:** This was the biggest category of responses.
- ❖ **Interpersonal, relational, and leadership skills:** These were also frequently mentioned
- ❖ **Theological understanding, personal faith, and preaching/teaching:** Also important. Relationships with congregations, creativity, innovation, discernment, open-minded, visionary, good communication, integrity, commitment, conflict management, and justice-seeker were also frequently mentioned.

Please see the appendix for a complete ranking of the skills and gifts that were mentioned as being important for our next bishop.