

Dear Colleagues in the Gospel,

As our synod prepares for a Synod Bishop Election this June, we are distributing this précis regarding the election process, drawn from the ELCA Guidelines. The complete 2019 Toolkit for Synod Bishop Elections and related documents are located under the “Synods” tab of the Office of the Secretary’s resource page: <http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/Office-of-the-Secretary>. We encourage you to download and review these materials, in addition to the information included in this document.

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**Introduction:** Electing a bishop is one of the most important responsibilities in the life of a synod in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and a key responsibility of the Synod Assembly. As an election, it is a process governed by the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of the synod; however, it is also a call process. As such, it involves discernment, from the perspective both of individual potential nominees and of the synod as a whole. Thus, engaging in prayerful reflection and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit are indispensable aspects of the process of nomination and election, regardless of the particular provisions in the synod’s governing documents.

**Information from Nominees:** The synod must be prepared to obtain biographical and other information from nominees. With respect to substance, both background information and responses to open-ended questions should be obtained. Because communication skills are important for a bishop, voting members should have the opportunity to see how nominees answer important questions in writing. Open-ended questions also allow nominees to address issues raised in the synod’s profile and important synod priorities. At whatever stage of the process biographical information is obtained, the Bishop’s Election Committee should review the forms submitted by nominees before they are finalized and distributed. For the appearance of fairness, completed forms should be disseminated at the same time for all nominees, if possible. If nominees are identified in advance, biographical and other information can be posted on the synod’s website and distributed to congregations and voting members.

**The First Ballot:** After a time of meditation and the report of the Credentials Committee, the person conducting the election will review the process for casting the first ballot, announce the vote required for election, and solicit questions. (Pursuant to *Robert’s Rules of Order [Newly Revised]*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., Section 45). once voting begins, there should not be any interruptions, so care should be taken to ensure that the opportunity exists to answer all questions before initiating the voting process.) During this time persons who are not voting members should move to areas outside those occupied by voting members.

After the report of the first ballot, the presiding officer will address the process for nominees to withdraw from the election process. It also is important to remind nominees that a background check and screening will take place in accordance with the synod’s governing documents and policies, and an Authorization and Release for Background Check and Screening form will need to be signed at an appropriate time.

**After the First Ballot:** It is important to incorporate sufficient time in the agenda to confirm that nominees are on the roster of ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church and to provide an easy and expeditious process for allowing nominees to withdraw. This process should involve use of a written form, such as the one provided in the Appendix. If a person is not present at the assembly, the Bishop’s Election Committee will allow a person to withdraw by telephone when heard by at least two members of the Bishop’s Election Committee. The process for withdrawing should not include people going to microphones to withdraw verbally.

The Bishop’s Election Committee should be prepared to contact nominees who are not in attendance at the Synod Assembly. If an absent nominee does not desire to withdraw, the nominee should be invited to attend the Synod Assembly and to submit biographical and other information as prescribed in the synod’s procedures. If the nominee cannot attend, a representative may be identified to speak on the nominee’s

behalf or a speaker phone arranged, if these alternatives are authorized by the synod's procedures. The second ballot for bishop will be scheduled a sufficient time after the report of the first ballot to allow adequate time for withdrawals, contact of absent nominees, and preparation of a new written ballot. In addition, if biographical information will be obtained, it is advisable to distribute forms to nominees on the second ballot in order to save time between the second and third ballots.

**Subsequent ballots:** The process for the second and subsequent ballots is essentially the same as the first ballot, except voting members will vote only for persons whose names appear on the ballot. Thus, after an interim report of the Credentials Committee, the person presiding will explain the process for that ballot, answer questions, call for a period of silence, either the presider or a prayer team member lead prayer, and call for the balloting. After voting takes place and the ballots are collected, the second (or subsequent) ballot for bishop will be declared closed. Prior to the Third Ballot (if needed), the Bishop's Election Committee will distribute the *Authorization and Release for Background Check and Screening and the Disclosure Form for Nominees*.

**Questions to Nominees:** Our process will provide for a question-and-answer period when the number of nominees is reduced following the second ballot. Exactly the same questions will be asked of each nominee. Before the question-and-answer period begins, the person presiding at the election should review the ground rules with the nominees and lead them in prayer.

**Nominee Speeches:** Provision for speeches from nominees will be provided. Instruction will be given that there will be no applause after individual speakers; after all speeches are completed, the person presiding at the election will thank and invite applause for all nominees.

**The Election:** When, as the result of any ballot, there is an election, the person reporting for the Elections Committee should advise the person presiding *before* the formal report is made to the assembly. The Bishop's Election Committee will check the percentages determined by electronic voting to make sure that an election has taken place. When there has been an election by the required percentage of the vote, the Elections Committee will announce that fact in advance of the vote totals. After the opportunity for a brief presentation by the person elected, the person presiding (if other than the current bishop) will return the chair to the bishop.

**Election Criteria:** The following criteria will govern whether an election has taken place –

**First (Ecclesiastical) Ballot:  $\frac{3}{4}$  of legal ballots**

**Second Ballot:  $\frac{3}{4}$  of legal ballots**

**Third Ballot:  $\frac{2}{3}$  of legal ballots**

**Fourth Ballot: 60% of legal ballots**

**Subsequent Ballots: simple majority of legal ballots**

May the Holy Spirit guide our synod in this important discernment and call process, and bless all that we will do together in the work of Christ in this place!