Southwest California Synod – 2021 Synod Assembly
Bishop Election

Questions & Answers

1. **What is the Bishop Election process?**

Bishops are elected for a term of six (6) years. The Bishop Election Process is governed by the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of the Synod. ELCA Churchwide procedures, guidelines and suggestions are also used. The Bishop Election is also a call process. It involves discernment of individual potential nominees and of the Synod and its members as a whole. *Engaging in prayerful reflection and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit are indispensable aspects of the process of nomination and election.*

2. **Is Bishop Murray Finck open to being nominated for a six-year term as Bishop of our SWCA Synod?**

No. Bishop Finck is a retired Bishop and can only perform in the role of an Interim Bishop and/or serve in a similar capacity for a congregation. Eligible individuals from within our Synod and from outside our Synod will be nominated in the 2021 Bishop Election process, many electing to participate in the pre-nomination process.

3. **What type of ballot does our SWCA Synod use for bishop election?**

The Synod uses the ecclesiastical ballot for electing the bishop. The first ballot is the nominating ballot. Any pastor of the ELCA in good standing may be nominated. Persons identified in the pre-nomination process must be nominated by someone on the first ballot in order to be considered as a candidate in subsequent ballots. Their names will NOT be printed beforehand in the first ballot.

In light of COVID-19, and the prospect that the 2021 Synod Assembly may require virtual attendance, voting would then be done using e-communications. A company/vendor specializing in member identification and balloting procedures will be sought to provide this level of expertise.

4. **Who will manage our Synod's Bishop Election process?**

Our Synod's Bishop Election Committee will manage the Bishop Election Process. This Committee is comprised of: Pr. Dean W. Nelson, Bishop Emeritus; Randall Foster, Synod Vice President; Pr. William Hurst; Pr. Ruth Sievert; Carol Bjelland; Terri Pyle; and Laura Kruger. Sheri Dillon and Samantha Henderson of our Synod's Staff will help the Committee in its work. The actual election of the Bishop at the Synod Assembly (counting of ballots) will be conducted by the Synod's Election Committee with assistance from the Bishop's Election Committee, as needed.   Again, if a virtual assembly is required, assistance from a vendor to count e-ballots will occur.

The Bishop Election Committee will communicate with the Synod's Conferences and Congregations about the Bishop Election Process including written communications and informational Conference meetings. A Churchwide representative will confer with our Synod's Bishop Election Committee in advance of the Assembly and oversee the Bishop Election. An executive from Churchwide will be either on-site or virtually present for our Synod's Bishop Election Process.

5. What information will be requested from candidates?

All candidates will be asked to complete biographical information and background check forms. All candidates will also be asked to respond to certain open-ended questions addressing their leadership, experiences and their vision for the Synod and its members. Forms will be provided. Pre-nomination candidates will be asked to provide this information in advance of the Assembly. Candidates who are nominated at the Assembly will be provided with the forms to be completed at the Assembly. If virtual, then email transmittals will be used to provide candidates with the aforementioned documents.

6. What are the steps in the Bishop Election Process at the Synod Assembly?

The Bishop Election will be conducted at our Synod's annual Assembly (whether in-person or virtual), which will be held June 4 - 5, 2021 (site, if in person, to be determined).

The Bishop Election portion of the Assembly Agenda will open with prayer and reflection on the role and responsibility of Bishop and the important decision the Assembly will make in the election process. Following prayer and reflection, the Churchwide Representative conducting the Bishop Election will describe to the Assembly the procedures regarding the ballots to be cast, the required margins for elections, the timing of balloting, and other aspects of the election process. Following is a brief summary of steps in the Bishop Election Process:

A. The Credentials Committee shall report the number of eligible voting members at each ballot round.
B. At the First Ballot and subsequent ballot rounds, the required number of votes to elect will be announced.
C. Paper Ballots and electronic voting devices will be distributed to all voting members.
D. The First Ballot will be the nominating ballot.
E. The Assembly will vote.
F. The results will be published, including the number of votes received for each nominee.
G. A candidate may withdraw his or her name from further consideration after the First Ballot.
H. Second and later ballots rounds will be conducted as needed; results will be published after each ballot round.
I. If the Bishop Election progresses to a third ballot, the process will include an opportunity for nominee speeches to the Assembly. A question and answer period will take place should the Election progress past a third ballot.
J. At the conclusion of the Election process, final results will be published. The elected nominee will be announced.
K. The elected Bishop will have an opportunity to address the Assembly.

7. Will the Synod's Conference-driven assessment of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats be shared with the candidates?

Yes, the results from this three-month extensive process of information gathering will be summarized and reported with an executive summary highlighting the challenges and opportunities facing the synod, its conferences and congregations. Moreover, concerns lifted during this process will help guide the Q/A process during the third ballot in which candidates are given a chance to present their perspectives and executive platforms.