Hello again!

Under this year's theme, **Reformation 500...Now What?**, we will continue to think about the ways that this synod and this church are being called to be an ever-reforming presence in the one holy catholic church.

In the first conversation, Bishop Gordy showed us a snapshot of the demographics of these four states that make up the territory into which this synod is called to do ministry. He also gave a demographic glimpse of who you are as a synod and asked you to talk at your tables about the context in which your own congregations are called to be Christ’s presence in the neighborhood.

With the election of a new bishop coming up a year from now, synod leadership wants to spend the next 40 minutes or so thinking together about the leadership needs of this synod. What do the congregations of the Southeastern Synod and their ministries need to equip them to live out God's call as Christ’s body in their communities?
In particular, your synod leadership wants this assembly to think together about what gifts, skills and vision the next synod bishop will need to lead the synod into the future. This time together around tables is a chance for open and honest dialog with one another that will hopefully begin to yield a profile of who you are as the Southeastern Synod, who God might be calling you to serve in your neighborhoods, and who might serve well as the synod’s bishop beginning September 1, 2019.

The conversations you are having today will help your Synod’s Mutual Ministry Committee, Synod Council, and staff plan similar conversations which will take place in the deaneries all around the synod between now and the next Synod Assembly.

So, “Now what?” Where does this synod go from here, or, better, where are you being called to serve, welcome, and love our neighbors in Jesus’ name. In the Guidebook for this Assembly, there is some material to help think through this together. You can find that as Exhibit 6. I hope you’ve had a chance to look over that material, but whether you have or not, you will want to have it handy to inform your table discussions.
Remember, this is a time to talk honestly and to include everyone in the conversation. We begin the questions where we left off this morning:

1-As you think about moving into the future and determining ways in which the congregations of this synod can fulfill their call to reach out into their various neighborhoods with the Gospel, what qualities and characteristics are you looking for in a bishop who can best accompany you in that process?  

(5 minutes)

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In the material in the Guidebook, you’ll see what the Bible and the Southeastern Synod Constitution have to say about the role of bishop. You’ll notice that the Bible has a lot less to say than the Constitution! As ELCA Secretary Chris Boerger is quick to point out, it’s the longest section in any of the three constitutions for the churchwide expression, synod and congregation. Also, in the Guidebook material, you’ll find a description of the role of synod bishop written by retired Bishop Gary Wollersheim. I invite you to have those materials readily available.
2-As you view these various descriptions of the role of a bishop, think about your responses to the first question. What are the points of connection? Are there any responsibilities of the bishop that surprise you?

*(5 minutes)*

+++ Bishop Wayne Miller of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod developed a list of *pastoral characteristics* and *leadership competencies* he believes are required of a bishop. The Southeastern Synod deans and Synod Council talked about Bp. Miller’s list and made some additions and changes to it. The result is what you see in the Guidebook material. Look at the list of Pastoral Characteristics and then at the list of Leadership Competencies. Then, at your tables, consider this question:

3-As you look at this list, which do you think are the most important in the next bishop of this synod? What would you add, eliminate, or change?

*(5 minutes)*

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In these times of dramatic change and what some have described as “downward mobility” in the church, not everyone is willing to take on the challenges of the synod bishop’s call. In the passage from First Timothy we read, “Whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task.” Someone else has said of those who aspire to the office, “Whoever desires it, deserves it.” Nevertheless, we believe that the church’s call to serve in the office is God’s call. And it has been noted more than once that the Spirit always uses imperfect vessels to contain the treasure that is the gospel, and “What the Spirit calls you to do, the Spirit will equip you to do.” At your tables, consider these questions:

4- Are there ways that we can encourage those who might serve well as this synod’s next bishop to be open to the call even if they are not inclined to do so?

5- What are the ways in which we can encourage a more diverse group of individuals in terms of age, race, gender and geography to be open to discerning this call and for members of this synod to be open to their discernment?

(7 minutes)

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In the time that remains, let’s hear a bit about what you heard at your table. If you learned something new, heard something important, or think that your table has identified something that needs to be shared beyond your table, go to one of the microphones and share it. We’ll hear as much as we have time for.

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Thank you for the good conversations at your tables. Here’s how you can help your Synod Council and deans as you continue this conversation through these twelve months. First, let them know what you think about this process and about the questions that have been asked. What changes would you recommend? Second, write those ideas down and give them to your dean or to a member of the synod staff. The Mutual Ministry Committee will consider them as they plan for these conversations across the synod.

Again...thanks for the conversation...and thanks for inviting me to part of this communal discernment.

“Bishop” in the Bible

The Greek word for “bishop” - *episcopus* - occurs in only three places in the New Testament:

**Philippians 1:1-2**
Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Timothy 3: 1-7**
The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, [Greek: *the husband of one wife*], temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

**Titus 1:5-9**
I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: 6 someone who is blameless, married only once [Greek: *the husband of one wife*], whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. 7 For a bishop, as God’s steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; 8 but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. 9 He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

*[All scripture quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.]*
What the Southeastern Synod Constitution says about the role and election of a bishop:

§8.10. Bishop

†§8.11. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly. The bishop shall be a minister of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

†§8.12. As this synod’s pastor, the bishop shall:

a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.

b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service.

c. Exercise solely this church’s power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synodical bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

d. Consecrate (or provide for the consecration of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service.

e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in the synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.

f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.

g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:

1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;

2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;

3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church’s life and witness in the areas served by this synod.

4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning this synod’s life and work.

5) Advise and counsel this synod’s related institutions and organizations.

h. Practice leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:

1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church;
2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers and congregations of this synod;

3) Be its chief ecumenical officer.

4) Consult regularly with other synodical bishops and the Conference of Bishops;

5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;

6) Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod; and

7) Be ex officio a member of the Churchwide Assembly.

i. Oversee and administer the work of this synod and in so doing:

1) Serve as the president of this synod corporation and be the chief executive and administrative officer of this synod, who is authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to sign deeds or other instruments and to affix the seal of this synod;

2) Preside at all meetings of the Synod Assembly and provide for the preparation of the agenda for the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, and the council's Executive Committee;

3) Ensure that the constitution and bylaws of this synod and of the churchwide organization are duly observed within this synod, and that the actions of this synod in conformity therewith are carried into effect;

4) Exercise supervision over the work of the other officers;

5) Coordinate the work of all synod staff members;

6) Appoint all committees for which provision is not otherwise made;

7) Be a member of all committees and any other organizational units of this synod, except as otherwise provided in this constitution;

8) Provide for preparation and maintenance of synodical rosters containing the names and addresses of all rostered ministers of this synod and a record of the calls under which they are serving or the date on which they become retired or disabled;

9) Annually bring to the attention of the Synod Council the names of all rostered ministers on leave from call or engaged in approved graduate study in conformity with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church and pursuant to prior action of this synod through the Synod Council;

10) Provide for prompt reporting to the secretary of this church of:

   (a) additions to and subtractions from the rosters of this synod and the register of congregations;

   (b) the issuance of a certificate of transfer for rostered ministers in good standing who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested, regular letter
of call under the jurisdiction of another synod; and

(c) the entrance of the names of such persons for whom proper certificates of transfer have been received;

11) Provide for preparation and maintenance of a register of the congregations of this synod and the names of the lay persons who have been elected to represent them; and

12) Appoint a statistician of this synod, who shall secure the parochial reports of the congregations, and make the reports available to the secretary of this church for collation, analysis, and distribution of the statistical summaries to this synod and the other synods of this church.

†S8.13. The synodical bishop may appoint an attorney, admitted to the bar within the territory of the synod or the state where the synod is located, to be Synod Attorney. The appointment must be approved by the Synod Council and reported to the Synod Assembly and to the ELCA secretary. The appointment continues until resignation or until a successor is appointed. The Synod Attorney provides legal advice and counsel to the synodical officers and the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney is expected to be familiar with the governing documents and policies of the synod and, as necessary, to attend meetings of the Synod Council. The Synod Attorney serves without salary but may be retained and compensated for specific legal services requested by the synod.

S8.14. The bishop may have such assistants as this synod shall from time to time authorize.

†S8.15. The presiding bishop of this church, or the appointee of the presiding bishop, shall install into office, in accord with the policy and approved rite of this church, each newly elected synodical bishop.
Bishop in the Tradition of the Church

*Episcopos* means, literally, “one who oversees,” that is, a supervisor, a superintendent.

Many scholars believe that in the very early church the term *episcopos* (bishop) and *presbyteros* (elder) were used interchangeably to refer to the person or persons who were the supervisory leaders of a house church. You will notice in the text from Titus that both words are used to refer to the same office.

By the time of Ignatius of Antioch, who died around 110 C.E., the term “bishop” was already clearly used in the sense of the order or office of overseer and was distinct from that of presbyter (elder, pastor).

When congregations grew by establishing satellites, a three-fold pattern emerges: bishop, elder (presbyter), deacon. These are the “orders of ministry” that were affirmed in “Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry” by the members of the World Council of Churches meeting in Lima, Peru, in 1982.

Historically, these are roles associated with the office of bishop:
- chief pastor of a diocese (synod),
- teacher,
- visitor,
- “defender of the faith,”
- ordainer of priests (pastors), and deacons,
- symbol of church unity.

In the ELCA, bishops
- Are installed to an office, not ordained
- Thus, they remain ordained as pastors
- Serve six year terms which are renewable, although some synods limit the number of terms a person may serve in the office.

Other facts about ELCA bishops:
- There are 65 synodical bishops and 1 presiding bishop in the ELCA. These 66 bishops and the Secretary of the Church make up the Conference of Bishops.

- The Churchwide Assembly and the Church Council make decisions for the church. Synod Assemblies and Synod Councils make decisions for synods. The Conference of Bishops serves only to give counsel in the church’s decision-making processes. On the Church Council, the chair of the Conference of Bishops has voice and vote and one bishop from each of the nine regions has voice but not vote. All bishops have voice and vote in the Churchwide Assembly.

- Every pastor on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament is eligible for election as bishop in any synod of the ELCA or as presiding bishop of the church.
One Bishop’s Description of the Bishop’s Call

Gary Wollersheim served as Bishop of the Northern Illinois Synod for 18 years until his retirement in 2016. Here is how he described the work of a synod bishop:

- A bishop is like a juggler trying to keep many balls in the air at one time including: synod, churchwide, congregations, agencies and institutions, full communion partners, global companions, family, spiritual life and much more.

- A bishop is like a human resources director because a bishop is trying to match congregational missional needs with rostered leaders’ spiritual gifts. This is a big challenge today because of the shortage of pastors.

- A bishop is like a plumber because a bishop is sometimes called upon to clean up other people’s messes. The worst mess is clergy misconduct.

- A bishop is like a college president who is always raising money and trying to supervise faculty, most of whom have tenure. A bishop is always raising money for: Churchwide, synod, agencies and institutions, malaria, anniversary, companion synods and etc. And also a bishop is dealing with the clergy, which is similar to tenured faculty.

- A bishop is like a lawyer trying to carefully follow due diligence to avoid law suits against the synod. But because bishops serve on several boards of directors of agencies and institutions of the church, chances are that at any given time bishops are being named in a law suit.

- A bishop is like a farmer, you plant seeds but you can’t control the weather. Since each congregation is a separate not for profit corporation, ultimately the congregation determines their own destiny. But bishops still plant seeds in hopes that some will take root.

- A bishop is like an ambassador representing the whole church to congregations and others. The bishop’s job is to build bridges, develop relationships and foster partnerships.

- A bishop is like a high school principal because the principal is charged with maintaining order and providing a safe environment so that the teachers can teach and the students can learn. The bishop is called to advocate for a safe environment so that the Gospel can be proclaimed.

- A bishop is like a coach who encourages a spirit of teamwork in the church for the common goal of making disciples of all. The bishop does this through encouragement, prayer, teaching, mentoring, resourcing, leadership and much more.

- A bishop is first and foremost a pastor, like all other pastors in the church. A bishop is called to preach, teach, administer the sacraments, and care for God’s people. To me, this is the best part of the bishop’s calling and frankly the only one in which the seminary and internship prepares us for. But God is gracious and amazingly provides for the rest.
Considering Character and Competence in Possible Candidates for Bishop

Bishop Wayne Miller, Metropolitan Chicago Synod developed this outline of assets needed in the office of bishop. It was revised by your deans and Synod Council.

Pastoral Character

Integrity
To what degree does this pastor tell the truth, honor and respect boundaries, walk the talk of faith

Quick to Listen; Slow to Speak
Does this pastor know all the answers before the conversation starts? To what degree does this pastor show a desire to listen to others and respond thoughtfully?

Approachable and Accessible
Approachability is a character trait. Accessibility is the discipline of making enough space in your day to respond to the unexpected.

Leadership Partner
To what degree do you feel that this pastor’s decisions are appropriately collaborative and participatory?

Values What is Old and What is New
How would you evaluate this pastor’s ability to let new ideas and approaches stand side by side with valued patterns and traditions?

Failure Friendliness
Is there a spirit of playfulness in leadership that encourages people to try and learn honestly from failure?

Loves and Values People as They Are
Do people feel that this pastor sincerely loves them as they are, or do they need to be someone else in order to be loveable?
Leadership Competency

Dynamic and Inspiring
To what degree do people experience this pastor’s preaching, teaching and personal style to be inspiring for faith and life?

Visionary
Does this pastor articulate a clear, attainable picture of the preferred future for mission?

Motivated and Motivating
Do you feel that this pastor is energized by the work of mission and ministry, and is that energy contagious?

Systematic and Systemic
To what degree is this pastor orderly and organized in leadership processes and to what degree is he/she aware of the overall emotional dynamics of congregations and organizations?

Clarity, Consistency and Courage
To what degree is this pastor transparent, predictable, decisive, and determined enough to keep going in the face of unpleasant resistance?
Table Questions

Session 1

1. For several years we have talked about a goal of having our congregations look like their neighborhoods. The data shared today show that, for most of us in this synod, we are still a long way from that goal. What does your congregation’s neighborhood look like? How different is the make-up of your congregation from the make-up of your neighborhood? Why do you think this is? What could your congregation do to make that change in your context?

2. “The church of the 21st century will be more like the church of the 1st century than it will be like the church of the 20th century.” Do you think this is the case? Why or why not?

3. What needs to happen in the church and in your congregation if it is to carry out its gospel mission as we move into the next 500 years of the “Lutheran movement?”

4. Think about your congregation’s ministry context. How could the next synod bishop and her/his staff, the Synod Council, and your dean help you reach your neighborhood with the good news of God’s love shown to us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

Session 2

1. As you think about moving into the future and determining ways in which the congregations of this synod can fulfill their call to reach out into their various neighborhoods with the Gospel, what qualities and characteristics are you looking for in a bishop who can best accompany you in that process?

2. As you view these various descriptions of the role of a bishop, think about your responses to the first question. What are the points of connection? Are there any responsibilities of the bishop that surprise you?

3. As you look at this list, which do you think are the most important in the next bishop of this synod? What would you add, eliminate, or change?

4. Are there ways that we can encourage those who might serve well as this synod’s next bishop to be open to the call even if they are not inclined to do so?

5. What are the ways in which we can encourage a more diverse group of individuals in terms of age, race, gender and geography to be open to discerning this call and for members of this synod to be open to their discernment?