

Script Part 2 of Bishop Election conversation

In the first part of this conversation, we looked at a snapshot of the demographics of these four states that make up the territory into which this synod is called to do ministry. We also saw a demographic glimpse of who we are as a synod and we talked 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 hour 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, we want 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 is a chance for open and honest dialog with one another that will begin to yield a profile of who we are as the Southeastern Synod, who God might be calling us to serve in your neighborhoods, and who might serve well as the synod's bishop beginning September 1, 2019.

These conversations 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.

To help us in these conversations, there is some material we'll use to guide our conversations. *[If you haven't already done so, distribute the material provided or let participants know where they can find it on their computers or tablets. It would be very good to have this available via email so that participants could read it ahead of time.]*

Remember, this is a time to talk honestly and to include everyone in the conversation. We begin the questions where we left off in the first session:

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 us in that process at this time?

(10 minutes)

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In the material provided, 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 material, you'll find a description of the role of synod bishop written by retired Bishop Gary Wollersheim.

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?

(10 minutes)

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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 material provided. Look at the list of Pastoral Characteristics and then at the list of Leadership Competencies. Then, 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?

(15 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 that “what the Spirit calls you to do, the Spirit will equip you to do.” Consider together 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? 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?

(10-15 minutes)

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6-The Southeastern Synod has had a robust and effective youth and young adult ministry for decades. The synod has thought this important enough that for the past 20 years there has been a full-time youth and young adult director on the staff. The synod’s focus on faith development in youth and young adults likely has been a major reason that, in a time when there is a shortage of clergy in the ELCA, our synod has had a great number of candidates for rostered ministry – far more than our synod alone can use. How important do you think it is for

the next bishop to be able to relate well with youth and young adults? What are the attitudes and skills helpful in making those connections?

(10-15 minutes)

[If there is time, ask for people to talk about what they heard in their conversations. Did they learn something new, hear something important, or think that their group identified something that needs to be shared beyond your table. If so, invite them to speak it.]

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[At the end of the sessions, thank people for participating. Then encourage them to continue this conversation between now and May 30th.]