

February 8, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We would like to thank all of you who are taking an interest in sharing your thoughts and ideas with the folks from the ELCA's Office of Research and Evaluation Team (ORET) as part of our Synod Self-study. We are expecting to see a report from ORET in mid-March. It is the expectation of the Synod Council that this self-study will provide helpful information for all of us, not just as we elect a new bishop of our Synod, but in the life and ministry of our Synod for the next several years.

At the January meeting of the Synod Council, a Pre-Identification Process was approved as a prelude to the election of a new Synod bishop at our Synod Assembly, May 21-23 in Marquette. This process will allow for the identification of individuals, prior to our Synod Assembly, who would be open to election as our Synod Bishop.

This process is not a nomination process but a way for individuals to express an interest in serving in the office of Synod bishop. Our Synod constitution requires that we use an Ecclesiastical Ballot to elect a synod Bishop. This means that every voting member of the Synod Assembly will, on the first ballot, receive a blank ballot and they will be instructed to write down the name of any pastor who is currently on the ELCA Roster of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament. So even if someone is pre-identified as open to election as bishop during the Pre-Identification Process, some voting member of the Assembly will still need to write their name on that first Ecclesiastical Ballot to officially nominate them for election.

We believe the benefit of this Pre-identification Process is the dissemination of information about individuals willing to serve as our Synod bishop prior to the Assembly. Every individual who is pre-identified and wants to participate in the process will have an opportunity to provide a picture, some biographical information and the answers to several questions that would help us understand more about the individual. Those individuals who provide their information by the deadline will have their picture and information posted on our Synod website for all of us to view, think about, and pray about prior to the beginning of our May Assembly.

Here is how this Pre-Identification Process will progress:

By April 1 - The Self-Study Report and/or a Summary of the report will be made available on the Synod website for everyone to read.

April 1-15 - Identification of individuals for participation in the Pre-ID Process.

- An individual may identify herself/himself or he/she may be identified by someone else. An Identification Form will be provided on the Synod website to be used for all identifications. It would be prudent to have the permission of the individual you are identifying before submitting the form.
- The individual identified will be contacted by a member of the Transition Team to make sure they want to proceed and be pre-identified. If the individual agrees to proceed they will be provided with the Job Description for our synod bishop, the Biographical Information Form, and the two forms needed for background checks. These forms will be available on the Synod website.
- When all of the completed forms from an individual are received in the Synod Office that individual will be considered as pre-identified.
- Background checks will be done on all pre-identified individuals.

April 25 - Deadline for returning to the Synod office all Biographical Information and Background Check forms from identified individuals.

May 1 - A picture and all biographical information for all pre-identified individuals will be posted on the website.

May 21-23 - Synod Assembly and the bishop's election.

We hope you will continue to pray about who will be our next Synod bishop. We encourage all of you, pastors, Congregation Councils, or individual members of one of our synod congregations to use this Pre-Identification Process to lift up individuals who may serve us well as our next bishop. For this process to work we need participation from you, the leaders and members of our Synod congregations. We are hopeful that this Pre-Identification Process will provide helpful information to many of you in our Synod as well as our Assembly voting members as they seek to make informed and spirit-filled decisions at our Assembly when casting their votes for the next bishop of our Synod.

If you have questions about this Pre-Identification Process please do not hesitate to contact one of us.

God Bless you!

Yours in Christ

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