

## Cluster Responses to Bishop Election Questions

11/12/2016

*Responses from 11 of 12 Clusters*

### 1. What are we able to do better as a synod and congregations working together for the sake of Christ's mission than as individual congregations?

- Outreach - Support joint/social ministries e.g. prisons, colleges, Estate Planning for the Heart, Latino ministry, Pasco Latino Lutheran Ministry, bible camps, serve the poor; meal programs; quilts
- Social Justice
- Mission development/New Ministry supported from grants from Churchwide and Synod; Urban development; Share Fund
- Financial & Personnel
- Perspective of the larger church and how we can all work together; Instead of me it's we
- Institutional Support: seminaries, camps, colleges
- Accountability
- Train Leaders
- Candidacy
- Stimulate and inspire each other to what's possible; share ideas/programs/resources
- Not alone; pool and share our resources, skills and talents
- Economy of scale- common resources can be used by all congregations; pooled resources allows for the ability to bring in good speakers
- Diversity/different perspectives; Welcoming all people – refugees, LGBT, all others
- Appreciate and promote Local, National and International ministries – Disaster Relief, World Hunger, Lutheran Community Services, Lutheran World Relief, Lutherhaven
- Global voice in mission
- WELCA, Men in Mission, Youth Gatherings
- Support communities
- New church development
- Send missionaries
- Campus ministry
- Collective is stronger than working individually – Congregations, Synods & Churchwide are the ELCA; we need to develop stronger relationships between the three bodies
- Support other congregations; fellowship and joint ministries between congregations; mutual ministry; collaboration; cooperation
- Call Process; provides support for those in calls
- Synod Assemblies – Networking opportunities are energizing; Synod Short give ideas for ministry
- Continuing education; Learning opportunities for laity and pastors
- Bishop Convocations
- Fund for Leaders scholarships
- Net-Workers (especially for laity and council presidents)
- Fellowship; Networking; Relationship building; Connecting congregations who might not take the initiative on their own
- Mutual support; Solidarity; Challenge each other:
- Commonality for people to re-establish in a new community
- Youth work; confirmation; Combined youth events
- Discipline/Conflict resolution
- Collegiality between clergy; Pastors find mutual support; Sharing of best practices

- Pastoral care
- Keeping others safe
- Ability to access diverse options
- Create cohesion/unity without hindering individuality
- Field personnel question regarding insurance, policies etc.
- Help develop documents and policies, establish standards
- Address geographical challenges
- Greater use of technology
- Raising our voices through promoting the Living Lutheran and Gather magazines
- Habitat for humanity
- Consistency in theology, worship and practice in synod
- Communication

**2. Considering the definition and responsibilities of a synod and this synod's mission statement and strategic plan, what has the synod done well and what has it done not so well in the last six years?**

**Well**

- Ventures in Stewardship training
- Mission Interpreter training
- Evangelism training
- Mission development training
- Synod Assemblies – workshops, worship, networking, fellowship, inspiring, Synod Shorts
- Bishop's Convocations
- End of Life curriculum development
- Ministry Support
- Purposeful equipping people for ministry
- The Way Forward planning
- My Synod: Moving in Mission campaign
- Help find new pastors and leaders into the synod
- Help congregations get through conflict; facilitating difficult conversations and engaging in them
- Support transition of new pastors and education
- Do a good job of building positive relationships between pastors in our cluster
- Make room for theological diversity
- Survive major changes; open to change
- Great office manager; availability of synod staff
- Communication by email, newsletter, website, Facebook
- Bishop and Synod Council work in harmony
- Strong connection between the Bishop and congregation members
- Thinking outside the box; Transformation – asked hard questions/try something new
- Bishop available, supportive and approachable; emotional support during pastor vacancy
- Bishop has shaped a culture of prayer/Jesus first
- Working together we can do more
- Call process
- Support during the call process
- Willingness to try a different staffing model with the Net-Workers – Time will tell if this model will be effective
- Campus ministry
- Share Grants
- Responding to racial and sexual justice
- Cluster partnerships

- Organization
- Stable consistent leadership
- Good at doing church stuff
- Support Churchwide initiatives – ELCA Campaign, Lutheran World Relief, Malaria Campaign
- Communication from Churchwide
- Communicate needs in other communities
- Progress in congregations understanding the value of the Synod and feeling part of the ELCA and how both can journey together in ministry
- Bishop election and transparency in the process
- Living in Faith
- All are welcome
- Friendly synod – we like one another
- Relationship building
- Support for first call pastors is excellent
- Worship leadership
- Good liturgically

### **Not Well**

- Helping congregation members understand the resources the synod can provide and the purpose of the synod
- Educating people to the programs in our church at large
- Communication – e.g. many members don't know about the ELCA national campaign despite all of the materials that have been published; better communication between congregations and understanding what they are doing; Synod did not communicate to the church council that the parochial reports need to be filled out each year; Need more communication; Greater communication from pastors about the Synod and Synod Council
- Greater synod involvement from pastors
- Expecting downward action instead of upward effort
- View the synod in a narrow focus for Call, Crisis, and Conflict resolution
- Synod does more for themselves than for congregations
- Net-Worker program; created more work for bishop and congregations; Need to be more proactive; Not as effective as the Assistant to the Bishop; Need job description for Net-Workers
- Lost Assistant to the Bishop
- Net-Worker retention; Recognizing limitations in current approach
- Under staffed; staff is stretch too thin
- Not resolving congregational conflicts to everyone's satisfaction; conflicts are never one-sided; Careful listening of the congregation's concerns and the pastors concerns during conflict; Taking too long to resolve conflict; Lack of direction for congregations during conflict and the feeling they are left on their own; Bishop is not bring people together
- Don't celebration successes/wins enough; Need to toot our own horn
- Need more optimization of resources and documentation of where the resources can be found
- Need to be better at telling our story
- Training for the laity
- Financial support for small rural congregations to help pay for pastors
- Financial support for new congregations and length of support
- Disconnect between congregations, synod and churchwide
- Taking congregations ideas and suggestions and make sure they get heard by the appropriate people
- Better support of youth; better leadership to keep younger people involved in congregations
- Working together

- No anxiety pastoral care needs and congregational needs
- Finding calls for other rosters
- Equal distribution and visibility by synodical leaders
- Personal connection with lay people, not just the pastors
- Use of technology
- Shrinking resources
- Financial support for the synod; question future viability; Sustainability
- Small congregations feel isolated
- Inactivity of some of the clusters
- Terminology
- Not capitalizing on friendliness and relationship building
- Costly Synod Assemblies
- New Wine Ministry consultant was not Lutheran based
- New missions are not done well
- Opportunities for leaders to meet more frequently
- Welcoming all people
- Respecting all especially as the church sees more liberal advance in a conservative population
- Visits by the Bishop are not common enough
- Better use of music and musicians
- Pastors need to do more for the bishop
- More support from synod during the call process

### **3. What should be the primary priorities for synod ministry in the next six years?**

- Visit more congregations; get reconnected with congregations
- Need the Bishop's Assistant position back; additional synod staff; determine best way to structure the office of the bishop in our large geography
- Support or reevaluate the Net-Workers
- More effective networking; encourage partnerships; we need each other as our numbers decrease
- Delegate "Firefighting" to someone other than the bishop
- Campus ministry
- Communication; Open door communication; communicating to all congregations; robust conversations about what is happening in congregations; meaningful communication
- Completion of the Synod's Mission Campaign
- Call Process
- Candidacy
- Viability of Synod/Congregations; Sustainability/Viability; Strategic planning
- Transitional Bishop
- Bishop building relationships and trust with congregations
- Help congregations heal that have been in conflict
- Community Organizing Ministry/Help congregations connect with their communities
- Social Justice
- Funding seminaries
- Support for pastors to prevent burnout
- Evaluation the large number of pastors approaching retirement
- Ability to embrace and lead through times of change
- Encourage understandings of other religions and ethnicities and work together ecumenically. Be a voice against hatred, intolerance, racism and bigotry; LGBT support; Inclusiveness; Diversity
- Faith formation and discipleship development
- Provide council training

- Listen for the movement of the Holy Spirit
- Fostering real community at the cluster level
- Strengthen congregations
- Connect synod to congregations. “Will the synod help struggling congregations be all that they can be or just let them die out?”
- Help small congregations discern what is next for their ministry/future; provide quality rostered pastors to the rural congregations to help them grow; creative staffing for small congregations; share leadership
- Strengthen the relationships between ministries of the synod
- Open to death of what we know and what resurrection may be
- Help congregations overcome a sense of isolation and a feeling they are all on their own
- Fostering connection of congregations to the synod and impart a vision of the larger church and how they can work together in ministry
- Help congregations to grow and bring people to Jesus; Revitalization of existing congregations
- Support for new mission congregations
- Creating new congregations and ministries
- Improving technology used by the synod and how technology can be used innovatively; more communication via email and other technologies
- Evolving stewardship
- Youth leadership development
- Foster ideas in how to keep post-confirmation youth involved in church
- Care for leaders
- Leadership development; foster the development of lay leadership for ministry within congregations that cannot afford a pastor
- Support education for non-traditional (TEEM) contextual education
- Latino ministry
- Assess rostered leadership to determine if they are supporting congregation goals and remove the rostered leaders if they are not meeting expectations
- Help rural congregations with the high costs of health insurance or allow congregations to use state offered plans

#### **4. What should congregations in the synod expect of the synod’s bishop in the next six years?**

- To be known- develop relationships
- Meet with congregations and clusters before problems occur
- To be hopeful, undaunted by changes – Focus on resurrection, not death or dying
- Help small congregations accept dying & death and closing the doors with grace
- Mutual encouragement and respect
- Hopeful with a backbone
- Have a physical visit to each congregation once per year; especially smaller congregations; conduct virtual visits
- Cluster gatherings with in the first year to welcome and introduce the new bishop – use Skype if necessary
- Synod communicates to congregation councils by conference calls, Skype or other technology to know they are cared for by the bishop. Caring bishop & synod = caring congregations
- Enlightened leadership; inspirational; Integrity
- Delegating
- Support congregations develop an awareness of how they can do ministry in their communities; get us excited about mission;
- Generational inclusion

- Open minded/good listener/non dictatorial/understanding
- Listen to congregation's concerns; address concerns promptly
- Celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation and help congregations continue to reform their ministries
- Innovative/daring/visionary/creative/entrepreneurial /look outside the box
- Strategic planning
- Lead call process
- Liaison to and communicator for Churchwide
- Conflict manager; Wise guidance and problem resolution; intervene when council does not have the skills to deal with conflict
- Provide healing process for congregations hurt by conflict
- Communication; much more from the synod to congregation
- Support of stewardship and evangelism
- Representation from the Bishop's office
- Pastor's pastor
- Share information with pastors
- Cluster dinners
- Organizational structure for clusters – it is necessary
- Change/renewal/newness/do things differently/clears the path for change without setting barriers
- Empowers and encourages
- Prayerful support
- Team player
- Collaboration between synod and congregations ; connectedness
- Available for special celebrations e.g. anniversary celebrations
- More accountable and available to all; Hold congregations accountable
- Pastor care to congregations
- Teach
- Provide resources
- Less (allow for learning curve/transition)
- Attentiveness to own spirituality
- Good liturgical foundation
- Solve high health insurance through Portico; come up with a cost sharing plan
- More focus on the work of the synod rather than the work done by the Conference of Bishops
- Discuss the resources shared between the synod and churchwide and where necessary fight for more synod support
- Use of technology to stay connected

##### **5. What should the synod's bishop expect of congregations in the synod in the next six years?**

- Increased Mission Support; 10% per congregation
- Support of Synod's programs/ministries
- Support synod initiatives i.e. Net-Workers
- Better communication; routine two-way conversations; honest/direct conversations
- Congregations communicate to members what is going on at the Synod and Churchwide
- All congregations turn in parochial reports
- Prayer for our work together; pray we will be viable in 6 years
- Work together to innovate, experiment, take risks and willing to try new things/be daring/courageous; Curious
- Cooperation/participation /support/companionship

- Joyful consistent service; Positive energy
- Share ideas and stories of ministry
- Resources are shared between the congregations and synod and churchwide effectively
- Appreciation and respect for bishop and staff
- Mutual encouragement and respect; no blaming
- Support for a vision
- Be hopeful/positive – No fear
- Address challenges before implosions occur; solve minor congregation issues within the congregation
- Share the Good News; sense of mission
- Willingness to be disciples, apostles and evangelists
- Welcoming, intentionally inviting, and hospitable
- Prayerful and generous support of ministries, time and talents
- Synod Assembly voting members ; volunteers
- Participate actively in clusters
- Regular gatherings of congregations
- Patience and realistic expectations
- Patience during transitions
- Compassion
- Faithful
- Holy hilarity
- Transformational ministry
- Welcoming relationships
- Mission interpretation
- The Bishop has to do everything
- Allow a work-life balance, encourage/support self-care
- Awareness of travel for bishop
- Willingness to be led
- Congregations are struggling financially and mission support can be challenging especially for small rural congregations
- Anxiety and problems with congregations
- Remember we are diverse and be respectful of one another. Be able to compromise
- Understand the new bishop will be different than Bishop Wells

## **6. What is your picture for the way forward for our Synod and Congregations?**

- Connectedness/teamwork/working together/inclusion
- Community Ministry
- Values retention while broadening mission; mission focused
- Better inviters. Start practicing the E in ELCA
- Better at education ourselves of our history and theology so we can tell the story; Tell the good news of the Gospels; faith development
- Anchored in tradition, open to innovation/thinking outside the box; Willingness to change; creative
- Honor the strong roots of our tradition that enables us to reach out to encourage diversity and tolerance
- Congregations filled with children, youth and young adults
- Outreach to millennials
- More cross-generational opportunities, less siloing by age group
- Health and vibrancy
- Challenging and exciting; encouragement
- Common vision of relationship

- Firm on Vision, Flexible on Execution
- Healthy, frequent and respectful communication both ways
- Communicate what is working in other congregations
- New Day dawning, new life springing forth, death and suffering (both personal and institutional) will lead to resurrection
- Entering together the hopeful mystery of the fog
- Engaged with diverse populations/cultures; make church a safe place for everyone
- Being fruitful and faithful; stepping out in faith for ministry
- Connect today's struggles to reformation; 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary reforming opportunities
- Develop, instruct and equip leaders from within the congregations
- Synod leadership keep congregations informed on what is happening in small communities and churches
- Connect lay leaders to other congregations not just pastors
- Better education of pastors and congregations so they can better support each other
- Conduct ecumenical events; stronger ecumenical partnerships; look outside ourselves
- God's guidance
- Social events for Synod
- Supporting smaller congregations with finances and cost of ministries
- Match making between rural and urban congregations
- Annual meetings with all ministries
- Growth, connectedness, transition, health, faithfulness (Symbol – a tree with the phrase “Our roots must be through the cross”)
- Be more visible and voice our concern for the community i.e. take back Sunday & Wednesday nights
- Up and down ministry support
- Use technology to improve communication between congregations
- Strengthen mental health resources (support of Lutheran Community Services)
- Chaplains/campus ministry resources
- Estate Planning for the Heart
- Declaration on the Way
- Establishing trusting relationships; I love the synod, but healing is needed
- Ownership – congregations, synods and Churchwide is the ELCA
- Struggling amidst a sea of change

**1. In light of the Bible study and discussion today, what are the spiritual gifts and leadership attributes that are the most important for a bishop in this synod in the next six years?**

- Articulate
- Wise listening
- Listening healer
- Wise counsel
- Careful, thoughtful speaking
- Good delegation skills and accountability
- Sound scriptural understanding; God-centered; Theologian; Spiritual leader
- Strong administrative, organizational and resource management skills
- Follow up and follow through
- Visionary/Creative/Inspiring/Innovative
- Strong interpersonal skills; Relational; Personable
- Integrity
- Strong moral fiber
- Equip and teach others; Nurturing



- Discernment; Know when the Holy Spirit is showing up
- Hopeful/not easily discouraged
- Good Preacher
- Open to change and possibilities. Create a burning platform for change
- Trustworthy
- Good communicator
- Team Player
- Good temperament; Calm presence
- Hospitable/Gracious/Caring/Relational
- Compassionate
- Willingness to give of their time; Servant of servants; Stamina/good health
- Open-Minded
- Courageous; Touch skin; Decisive
- Dynamic
- Availability/approachability
- Call process
- Leadership skills; Sharing leadership
- Pastoral care; Pastor's pastor
- Good people skills
- Love the church/love people
- Pay retirement and medical for small congregations
- Sense of humor
- Embrace technology
- Love and understanding for our territory
- Set an example to congregations on how to do more with less
- Humility
- Heart for social justice
- Ability to balance work and life duties; time management
- Ability to speak out and take a stand
- Recognize and encourage ministries in the world
- Called
- Not political
- Prayerful
- Give wise counsel