

Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Bishop Nominee Biographical Information



Name: Rev. Kristen E.M. Kuempel

Current Position: Lead Pastor

Congregation Membership: First Lutheran Church of Kennewick, WA

Date of Ordination: September 8, 2002

List up to five (5) community, synodical, or Churchwide activities that would shape your call as bishop of this synod.

1. At-large member of the EWAID Synod Council.
2. Member of local interfaith community roundtable addressing issues of homelessness among area teenagers, mental health needs of young people.
3. Served on the Lutherhaven Ministries Strategic Planning Task Force.
4. Lutherhaven Ministries Program Task Force.
5. Strong supporter and advocate of Lutheran Community Services NW.

What is the essence of the promises you made at the time of your ordination, and how would you seek to fulfill those promises in your ministry if elected Bishop? (150 words max)

My entire sense of call is enmeshed with the understanding that the ministry I oversee and the call that I claim is God's call and God's ministry. At my very best: I function as a conduit. I fulfill this function by being diligent in prayer and study. My most passionate understanding of my call is that of being a "healer of the breach and a restorer of streets to live in." I believe we are called as Children of God to do just that. As bishop, I would seek to help the synod find hope in a future life as repairers and restorers, as we live out our baptismal calling to stand as lights in the darkness.

Describe your spiritual life and the way you prepare for ministry each day. How do you maintain spiritual focus and integrity? (150 words max).

Sometimes the ministry I think a day will hold and the ministry the day ACTUALLY holds are vastly different, so over the years I have learned to trust the Spirit and lean into the uncertainty, knowing that God holds everything and everyone in his hands--which is, I suppose, the very definition of faith. My prayer is always that I will see what God sees, and not be so wedded to my own agenda that I become an obstacle to the work that needs to be done, that God would place me where my gifts are most needed, and that he would stretch me and challenge me in ways that will develop my gifts to best serve God's Kingdom. Being aware of the Spirit helps me maintain spiritual focus and integrity.

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What, in your opinion, is the measure of great leadership, and in what ways do you either achieve or aspire to achieve this standard? (150 words max).

I think a great leader is one who is open, who listens, who values the input of others, and then makes a decision accordingly. Living in a time of great change, leaders who listen are more valuable than ever, as they seek to make the best choices possible for their organization and their people. Being willing to make the hard calls is important too, as is being able to admit when a decision wasn't the best one, and seeking forgiveness for any hurt or harm that has come because of that decision. I achieve this ideal through active listening in times of conflict, in asking questions and seeking understanding, and in making sure that all know that they have a place at God's table--regardless of the outcome of the decision. In the last few years First Lutheran has navigated a number of charged issues using this method, with good, solid outcomes.

What is your leadership style? (150 words max).

I possess a collaborative leadership style. I like to hear a multiplicity of opinions, and I feel a team is at it's most functional when everyone is playing to their passions and strengths. I am comfortable being the one in charge, but don't enjoy making unilateral decisions if I don't have to. I am not a micromanager, instead trusting my people to be responsible for their work and perform their tasks with professionalism and integrity. I recognize that I am not an expert in many things, and seek to find people who are to fill gaps in the teams I build. I enjoy laughing and chatting with people, but tend to be very focused when there is work to be done.