

## **2023 Pre-Synod Assembly Biographies of Nominees as of 05.26.23**

No elections are contested

### **Synod Council Ballot**

#### **Vice-President**

##### **Sharon Josephson**

- Church Membership: Trinity Lutheran Church, Detroit Lakes
- Present Vocation: Retired
- Please list your service in your congregation: Council President, Circle, WELCA, Confirmation and Sunday School teacher, Constitution Committee, and Altar Guild
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Synod Vice President, Vice President for Lutheran Advocacy Minnesota, Chair of Bishop Election Committee, Council and Reference Committee, Synod Council, Voting Member to three Churchwide Assemblies.
- Please list your service in your community: League of Women Voters, Book Club, Library Club, Becker County Historical Society, Various City appointed committees
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? Serving as your Vice President for the last four years have been an exciting adventure. Your Bishop and support staff are among the best in the entire Church. Your Synod Council has the vision and courage to step out in faith. I want to continue to serve with you to help shape the future of the Northwestern Minnesota Synod of the ELCA.

#### **Conference Representatives**

##### **Pr. Stephanie White, Conference 2, Rostered 1st term (2023-2026)**

- Church Membership: Redeemer Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls
- Present Vocation: Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Pastor; previous includes Youth & Family Ministry, Music Ministry, Stephen Ministry, Peer Ministry, Christian Education Director, Curriculum Developer
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Conference 2 member; Local Ministerial Association; previous includes Former Dean: Golden Triangle Cluster, Montana Synod, Synod Worship leader (MT), Director - Children's Program, Global Mission Event (1990), WELCA member and past President -

Olivet and Nat'l delegate, Fargo, ND, Speaker and Educational Consultant - EaND, WND, MT and NW-MN and SE-MN synods.

- Please list your service in your community: New to this community - beginning to find my niche.
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? Having served in various ways in the church for several decades, I bring both a historical framework and experience. Also, having lived and worked in several synods and states, I understand how the Gospel and our witness to it must be contextualized. I have helped train Lay preachers and supervised Lay Pastoral Associates, which could be helpful in developing a framework for meeting the challenges of the current and future state of the church. I also have a long history of working with other denominations, ecumenical collaborations, and inter-faith dialogues.

**Diane Mostad, Conference 4, Lay 1<sup>st</sup> term (2023-2025)**

- Church Membership: Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Kelliher
- Present Vocation: Retired and volunteer
- Please list your service in your congregation: Secretary, TWC Newsletter, Youth activities, Assisted Living activities, ShelfSavers
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Attended several Synod Conferences
- Please list your service in your community: Community Library, Heritage Center, FUN (Friends Up North) events planning
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? To see, learn, and contribute when I can

**Pr. Kayla Billings, Conference 4, Rostered 1<sup>st</sup> term (2023-2024)**

- Church Membership: First Lutheran Church, Bemidji
- Present Vocation: Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Associate Pastor - Bemidji
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Served on Pathways Board as VP, President, and Secretary, involved in Cohort 1 of Jeremiah 29 Project, was part of and is returning to Women's Resiliency Group, helped facilitate and lead Made, Known, Loved Book Study in NW MN Synod.
- Please list your service in your community: Serve as a volunteer for youth events, assist in school, and serve as a resource for local facilities when in need of a faith representative.

- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? Our synod is doing a lot of really great things as we seek to find ways to serve in the greater communities that we are a part of while simultaneously seeking to extend welcome by meeting people where they are on their own faith journeys. I am excited to have the opportunity to not only dream about where God may be calling us but to also engage with others from around our synod to hear how God is working in the world through our congregations, people, and conferences.

**Robert Stein, Conference 5 Lay, 2nd term (2023-2026)**

- Church Membership: Faith Lutheran Church, Wolverton
- Present Vocation: Retired
- Please list your service in your congregation: Past member and President of the Church Council
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Currently a member of Synod Council
- Please list your service in your community: volunteer with the Salvation Army and North Country Trail Hiking Association
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I believe we are doing good work in our synod and want it to continue.

**Beth Monke, Conference 7 Lay, 1<sup>st</sup> term (2023-2026)**

- Church Membership: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Fergus Falls
- Present Vocation: Licensed Psychologist
- Please list your service in your congregation: Contemporary Worship Team, Music and Worship Committee, Mission Team
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Voting Member for Synod Assembly 2022 and 2023 and I am a member of the Creation Care Affinity Group
- Please list your service in your community: Chapter Leader for Citizens' Climate Lobby in Fergus Falls, Citizens' Climate Lobby D7 Liaison, Natural Resources Advisory Group (to FF City Council), Write a monthly column in the Fergus Falls Daily Journal regarding climate change, have participated in a suicide prevention and mental health awareness group (sponsored by OTC human services)

- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? There was a need, and I am interested in knowing more about what goes on in our Synod.

### **Nola Smith, Conference 8 Lay, 1<sup>st</sup> term (2023-2026)**

- Church Membership: Shalom Lutheran Church, Alexandria
- Present Vocation: retired
- Please list your service in your congregation: Lector, Assistant Minister, Altar Guild, bring communion to shut-ins, lead children's sermons, occasional organist/pianist, attend weekly Bible study, member of local WELCA, and in the chime choir.
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: 2022 Conference voting member, voting member to Churchwide Assembly in Columbus, Ohio. Presently Conference 8 NW MN synod WELCA co-coordinator and on NWMN synod WELCA Board member. I will be a voting member at the upcoming Triennial WELCA convention in September.
- Please list your service in your community: Assisted an exhibitor at local Art in Park, Grape Stomp, Phelps Mill, and Little Falls. Foster parents for seven children that were physically, sexually, and emotionally abused. Hosted 14 foreign exchange students. Swift County Red Cross chairperson delivered meals for the free Pope County Thanksgiving meal. Fall conference chairperson and on the scholarship committee for MN-DONA (Minnesota Directors of Nurses Association) and founding member.
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? Because it would be an expression of my faith that extends beyond my local congregation. I enjoy meeting others and hearing about their stories of walking with Christ through good and bad times and how they express their faith. I feel that the Lord has given me leadership skills and talents in working with others in team situations to address issues/problems that arise and finding solutions that consider both sides of the issue, making sure others are heard in the process. I am newly retired and feel that the Lord has called me to be part of this challenge of being on the NWMN Synod council.

### **At-Large Representatives**

#### **Willard E Hiebert, At-Large Under-represented Population 1<sup>st</sup> term (2023-2026)**

- Church Membership: Trinity Lutheran Church in Moorhead
- Present Vocation: retired
- Please list your service in your congregation: I served as an usher for many years. I served one term on the church council. I served on two call committees. I am a member of a funeral serving group. I am a member of the group that takes care of the flower beds. I occasionally read the lessons in the traditional service.
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: I have not served in this capacity.
- Please list your service in your community: I'm an election judge. I serve at a homeless center. I'm active in a political party and lobby my state legislators on bills that I believe will benefit the people of Minnesota.
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? As a member of the ELCA for 50-plus years, I feel I have a background in the church and would like to represent the LGBTQ community in the Synod Council.

**Jan Halvorson, At-Large Under-represented Population, 1st term (2023-2026)**

- Church Membership: First Lutheran Church, Alexandria
- Present Vocation: retired
- Please list your service in your congregation: Bible Study participant, special music, hospitality team member. When I worked for the church about 18 years ago, I was the Children's Ministry Director, and I implemented a new Sunday School model with the help of a friend and grew the ministry from 23 children to over 200.
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: I haven't attended since my strokes. One of them was a major, and I had to learn everything all over again. Before that, I sang and played for WELCA. I sing and play piano by ear.
- Please list your service in your community: I was a visitor to about seven people (pre-pandemic) in our church who were on the prayer concern list.
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I was so honored to be asked. I believe that God calls me to do this.

**Pr. Eric Miller, At-Large Under-represented Population, 1st term (2023-2026)**

- Church Membership: Trinity Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls
- Present Vocation: Pastor

- Please list your service in your congregation: Pastor
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: I've had the pleasure of attending two Churchwide Assemblies; I've participated in Conference 2 Gatherings and the Anti-Racism Conference. In addition, I represent the ELCA at my local Ministers Union.
- Please list your service in your community: As a first-year pastor, I've just started getting involved in Community issues; I've been invited to join the Lions Club (Civic organization). In addition, I serve our local nursing homes as Holy Communion Service and as a shortened church service for residents of those homes.
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? Seeking to represent the body of believers, I bring the business knowledge to help move our synod forward. That business knowledge is that of being a firm manager in my previous profession for some twenty years.

### **Consultation Committee Ballot** (1 six-year term, no consecutive re-election)

#### **Pr. David Fleener (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: Shalom Lutheran Church, Alexandria
- Present Vocation: Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Pastor
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Conference 8 Dean, NW MN Synod: September 2020-present, East Central Indiana Conference Dean, IN-KY Synod: September 2013-August 2015
- Please list your service in your community: Alexandria Rotary Club
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? Learning about the need from our bishop, I believe I can provide a fair-minded, listening presence to congregations and other expressions of the church experiencing conflict. I have some experience mediating this sort of conflict as the president of a local ecumenical, mostly evangelical ministerium in 2015 when a large conflict erupted over recently-legalized same-gender marriage. Two pastors wanted the ministerium to issue a statement of condemnation. I made appointments with them (and other pastors) to listen to their concerns and express my own, grounded in our social statement Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust. Both pastors eventually decided to leave the ministerial association, but others who held the same position as they did chose to stay.

#### **Greg Tvrđik (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: First Lutheran Church, Alexandria

- Present Vocation: Church Administrator
- Please list your service in your congregation: 7 years as an employee, member since birth
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Assembly Planning Committee and Discipline Committee
- Please list your service in your community: President Board of Directors at Luther Crest Bible Camp. Habit for Humanity, Evening Lions Club, Hope Haven (homeless ministry), United Way. West Central Communities Action. Alexandria Area FFA Alumni Association
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? To use the gifts and experiences I have been fortunate to be given to assist others in ministry and administration.

### **Mary Peterson (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: Augustana Lutheran Church, Fergus Falls
- Present Vocation: retired
- Please list your service in your congregation: WELCA president, church council, choir, and quilting group
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Synod WELCA board, Conference 7 secretary, past Conference 7 WELCA coordinator, Churchwide Assembly Voting Member
- Please list your service in your community: Hospice volunteer and Habitat for Humanity
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I feel like God is calling me to further the work and message of our synod.

### **Discipline Committee Ballot** (1 six-year term, no consecutive re-election)

#### **Jerry Peterson (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: Augustana Lutheran Church, Fergus Falls
- Present Vocation: Synod Authorized Minister (SAM)
- Please list your service in your congregation: Serve as Synod Authorized minister to Aastad, Rock Prairie, and Augustana of Elizabeth
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Present synod council member & executive council, past chair of NW MN and EaND school for lay ministry, Member SAM committee, 2-time Voting Member to the Churchwide Assembly

- Please list your service in your community: Chaplain to Ottertail Sheriff's Posse, Chaplain on call Lake Region Hospital, President Fergus Falls Classic Car Club, Past Chair Habitat for Humanity
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I have been a pharmacy director, a Church Council Chair, Executive Council Member and have been involved in many disciplinary problems. I can use my experience to help, and want to hear both sides of the issue before a decision is made.

#### **Pr. PJ Malin (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: First Lutheran Church, Alexandria
- Present Vocation: Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Lead Pastor
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Conference Dean for Metro-Chicago Synod, Outreach Committee for Northern Illinois Synod
- Please list your service in your community: Hunger and Homelessness ministries, breakfast club for high school students, a cohort for Welcoming & Inclusion in Alexandria
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I value participation in the synod. I have been involved in previous synods. Now that I am in a new synod, I am looking for ways to serve. This opening was presented as a need I could help with.

#### **Larry Kent (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: Calvary Lutheran Church, Bemidji
- Present Vocation: Sr. Executive for National Non-Profit
- Please list your service in your congregation: Church Council, Strategic Planning Committee, Middle School SS, Mission Trip Leader, and Mentor
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: I have been a representative twice for Calvary and one time for Zumbro Lutheran Church
- Please list your service in your community: I serve as a Board Member at Pathways, I serve as a Board Member at Bike Bemidji, and I volunteer at the Boys & Girls Club
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? Share my gifts and experience where needed



**Pr. Kristin Ostercamp (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: Zion Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls
- Present Vocation: Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Pastor
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: I serve as Dean of Conference 2, the Thief River Falls Conference. I have also served previously on the Synod Candidacy Committee.
- Please list your service in your community: I am involved in the Thief River Falls Ministerial Association. I also advocate for the inclusion of children who are differently abled.
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I come to this work with an open mind and desire to work with integrity and openness as we discern what is best for our Rostered Ministers and Congregations facing challenging times.

**Pr. Doug Stave (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: First Lutheran Church, Battle Lake
- Present Vocation: Interim Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Interim Pastor at Zion Lutheran Amor
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church:
- Please list your service in your community: Network Battle Lake Member
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I think my experience and training as a Pastor for 25 years and a Special Education teacher for ten years will help me be an effective team member on this committee. When needed, this is an important committee for good order within the church.

**Pr. Phil Tobin (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: Central & South Immanuel Churches, Pelican Rapids
- Present Vocation: Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Serving a parish call at Central Lutheran with a subcontract to South Immanuel Lutheran.
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: Serving calls in NW MN Synod since 2004, A partial term as Conference Dean, Member of the Synod's Multi-Point Parish Affinity Group, and the Synod's Hybrid Church Affinity Group.

- Please list your service in your community: President of Pelican Rapids Ministerial, produced a Christian Concert at High school, serve with local food shelf and Welcome Center.
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? After 25 years of experience as an ordained pastor and a first career in our family business working with Human Resources, I could be a helpful member of the Discipline Committee.

**Pr. Caitlin Jensen-Brown (2023-2029)**

- Church Membership: First Lutheran Church, Karlstad
- Present Vocation: Pastor
- Please list your service in your congregation: Pastor
- Please list your service/involvement in the Synod/Conference/Churchwide expression of the church: I am on Synod Council and was in the Women's Resiliency Planning Group and the Women's Resiliency Circle.
- Please list your service in your community: I help with LSS Meals on Wheels in Karlstad and Greenbush
- Why do you want to serve the Synod in this way? I have the gifts to see both sides of a story. I try to be compassionate, fair, and non-reactionary.