

What has been happening in your church lately? Have you noticed new faces or missing familiar ones? Where do you put your energy? Is your church serving the community the same as the people who walk through the door on Sunday morning? Where do you sense God's presence when you gather as the body of Christ? What is missing? What do you hope for your church?

These are not easy questions, since many are happy to move along in life simply reacting to what goes on around us. But God calls us into abundant life, aware life, hopeful, imaginative, and full life. It means we are invited to dream and create a future with God. At Synod Assembly this April 27-29, we will continue to dream and create the picture of God's church in the Alaska Synod of the ELCA.

By now, your voting members from your church should be registered for the Assembly. If you don't know who they are, ask your pastor! At the beginning of April, plan some time to answer the above questions as a church. Then, look at the following pages taken from the Alaska Synod Constitution about the work of a bishop. (The full Synod Constitution can be found at elcaalaska.net under the "leadership" tab.)

In your experience, who are the pastors you know that could lead this synod in these ways? Who do you admire for their voice, their faith, their leadership? In what ways will they dream and create a future for God's church in Alaska? How will you and your church support this shared work in the Gospel?

Selecting a bishop requires this kind of reflection and conversation – whether it is a new person, or a second term for our current bishop. Please take time as a whole people of God for this kind of awareness, for prayer, and for discerning God's will for this chapter in our Synod.

God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Grant us, we pray, to be grounded and settled in your truth by the coming of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. That which we know not, reveal; that which is wanting in us, fill up; that which we know, confirm; and keep us blameless in your service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Christ's Peace to your spirit,
Amanda Kempthorne
Pastor, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, North Pole
Chair, Synod Bishop Election Committee

Alaska Synod Constitution – Chapter 8: Officers

†**§8.12.** As this synod's pastor, the bishop shall:

- a. Preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church.
- b. Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, ministers of Word and Sacrament, and its ministers of Word and Service.
- c. Exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synodical bishop of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ministry of Word and Sacrament (and as provided in the bylaws of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
- d. Consecrate (or provide for the consecration of) approved candidates who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for service as ministers of Word and Service.
- e. Attest letters of call for persons called to serve congregations in the synod, letters of call for persons called by the Synod Council, and letters of call for persons on the rosters of this synod called by the Church Council.
- f. Install (or provide for the installation of) rostered ministers whose calls the bishop has attested.
- g. Exercise leadership in the mission of this church and in so doing:
 - 1) Interpret and advocate the mission and theology of the whole church;
 - 2) Lead in fostering support for and commitment to the mission of this church within this synod;
 - 3) Coordinate the use of the resources available to this synod as it seeks to promote the health of this church's life and witness in the areas served by this synod.
 - 4) Submit a report to each regular meeting of the Synod Assembly concerning this synod's life and work; and
 - 5) Advise and counsel this synod's related institutions and organizations.
- h. Practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church and in so doing:
 - 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church:
 - 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established processes for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of rostered ministers, and congregations of this synod.
 - 3) Be the chief ecumenical officer of this synod;
 - 4) Consult regularly with other synodical bishops and the Conference of Bishops;
 - 5) Foster awareness of other churches throughout the Lutheran world communion and, where appropriate, engage in contact with leaders of those churches;

- 6) Cultivate communion in faith and mission with appropriate Christian judicatory leaders functioning within the territory of this synod; and
 - 7) Be *ex officio* a member of the Churchwide Assembly.
- i. Oversee and administer the work of this synod and in so doing:
- 1) Serve as the president of the synod corporation and be the chief executive officer and administrative officer of this synod; who is authorized and empowered, in the name of this synod, to sign deeds or other instruments and to affix the seal of this synod;
 - 2) Preside at all meetings of the Synod Assembly and provide for the preparation of the agenda for the Synod Assembly, Synod Council, and the council's Executive Committee;
 - 3) Ensure that the constitution and bylaws of this synod and of the churchwide organization are duly observed within this synod, and that the actions of this synod in conformity therewith are carried into effect;
 - 4) Exercise supervision over the work of the other officers;
 - 5) Coordinate the work of all synodical staff members;
 - 6) Appoint all committees for which provision is not otherwise made;
 - 7) Be a member of all committees and any other organizational units of the synod, except as otherwise provided in this constitution;
 - 8) Provide for preparation and maintenance of synodical rosters containing the names and addresses of all rostered ministers of this synod and a record of the calls under which they are serving or the date on which they become retired or disabled; and
 - 9) Annually bring to the attention of the Synod Council the names of all rostered ministers on leave from call or engaged in approved graduate study in conformity with the constitution, bylaws, and continuing resolutions of this church and pursuant to prior action of this synod through the Synod Council;
 - 10) Provide for prompt reporting to the secretary of this church of:
 - a) additions to and subtractions from the rosters of this synod and the register of congregations;
 - b) the issuance of a certificate of transfer for rostered ministers in good standing who have received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested, regular letter of call under the jurisdiction of another synod;
 - c) the entrance of the names of such persons for whom proper certificates of transfer have been received;
 - 11) Provide for preparation and maintenance of a register of the congregations of this synod and the names of the laypersons who have been elected to represent them; and
 - 12) Appoint a statistician of this synod, secure the parochial reports of the congregations and make the reports available to the secretary of this church for collation, analysis, and distribution of the statistical summaries to this synod and the other synods of this church.