



2026 BISHOP ELECTION NOMINEE BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM

Name: Patrick Shebeck

Current position: Senior Pastor, St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran Church, Saint Paul

Congregation membership: St. Paul-Reformation, Saint Paul

Date of ordination: December 7, 2007

Previous positions (most recent first):

- + Pastor, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Chicago Heights, IL
- + Intern, Central City Lutheran Mission, San Bernardino, CA
- + Cantor, Ashburn Lutheran Church, Chicago

Education and earned degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

- + Doctor of Ministry, Liturgical Theology + Catholic Theological Union, 2013
- + Master of Divinity + Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), 2007
- + Bachelor of Arts + St. Olaf College, 1999

List up to five of your current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as synod bishop.

- + Dean, City Conference, 2017-2023
- + Member and Chair, Reference in Council Committee, St. Paul Area Synod, 2023-present
- + Member and Chair, Discipline Committee, St. Paul Area Synod, 2021
- + ELCA Churchwide Assembly Voting Member, 2022 (Columbus)
- + St. Paul Area Synod Council, 2017-2023
- + Ecumenical Officer, St. Paul Area Synod, 2016-present
- + Chair of Personnel and Board Member, ELCA Deaconess Community, 2020-present
- + Board Member, The Seminar on Lutheran Liturgy, 2023-present
- + National Workshop on Christian Unity, 2016-present

List up to five of your current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as synod bishop.

1.) In each of the parishes I have served (including as an intern), the community has opened its doors to those without homes, providing shelter, support, and assistance. 2.) In addition to this, my journey through candidacy and pastoral ministry as a member of the GLBTQIA+ community has made me acutely aware of how the church has welcomed - or not - diverse communities with necessary gifts that the church must have if it is to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus in a credible way. This leads to...3.) Bocce Ball, believe it or not. I play on a local GLBTQIA + team, and this has provided invaluable insight into how this community views the church, how we speak to communities on the margins or communities that recoil from organized religion, and how we might have opportunities to reshape the narrative of where God is working in public. I still don't know how Bocce Ball works, but hope to in the fullness of the resurrection. 4.) We have been instrumental in establishing the St. Paul Sanctuary Coalition, which has provided support and help for immigrants, refugees, and undocumented persons since 2017. This effort now includes eleven communities of both Christian and non-Christian traditions.

What do you see as the principal challenge for this synod's bishop in the next six years? How would you address this challenge? (300 words max.)

Numerous communities in the ELCA find themselves - like the rest of the country - in contexts that are polarized by the rise of Christian Nationalism and political division. The next bishop's job will be to speak publicly to the values that we hold as disciples of Jesus Christ, articulating clearly the call to compassion, inclusion, and dignity for all people. The bishop represents the Synod in the local (Minnesota) conversation about these matters, and we as Lutherans cannot allow the term "Christian" to become an identifier of hate or of partisan allegiance. This is of the utmost importance, as political enmeshment of Christians in politics is good for neither the community nor the church. With this, undoubtedly, comes risk: risk of angering people, risk of membership loss, risk of discomfort. And still we are baptized, so we are safe, and still we speak about the compassionate and risky Jesus.

Secondly, I would be hopeful that the next bishop will explore possibilities for centralized administrative tasks for small parishes that can be collectively contributed to by smaller communities. Day-to-day administrative operations (personnel, finance, property) needn't be done by each parish separately when a collective union together might be able to accomplish them more efficiently and with greater cost savings to individual parishes. How this would look, function, or operate is an opportunity for creativity and exploration, but the days of each parish going it alone on administrative operations are over. This isn't glamorous, but - as a parish pastor - I can say that it is necessary. The devil might not kill parishes, but insurance rates do.

Third: our global partnerships remain immensely important, not only because they are mutually beneficial, but because they expand our vision of what the church is in all its diversity and rich expression. Expanding these partnerships is essential, most especially as (above) political trends continue to attempt division. Fourth: a solid, grounded, and faithful articulation of our Lutheran tradition is a gift to the world. An expansive realization of this will go far in accomplishing all of these goals (and more) in ways that make us both honest to who we are and open to the Holy Spirit working in the world.

Describe an experience in your life, and the personal and spiritual gifts that emerged, that have helped prepare you for the responsibilities of synod bishop.

(300 words max.)

In 2017, both Lutherans and Roman Catholics observed the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. St. Paul Area Synod (and Minneapolis) both participated for a year prior in dialog with the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and Saint Paul in ecumenical dialog as to how this should be marked. Extremely important theological and pastoral questions emerged, chief among them: does anyone even care about something that happened five hundred years ago? How are religious communities even relevant in an increasingly secularized world? How does division give way to unity? As we journeyed together that year, we discovered the rich gifts hiding in plain sight, and - more importantly - how *our* tradition is made richer by the way that God is working in others. Gathering twice in prayer to bookend this observance was a reminder: we are united in baptism, and our differences - important as they are - are not as important as the promise of that washing.

This is a larger metaphor for pastoral ministry, and especially a bishop. Bishops are charged with gathering the gifts of others and encouraging them to flourish, all grounded in our baptismal vocations to be faithful to the Gospel. The church is not complete without diverse talents, perspectives, experiences, and callings. It must gather these (and be prepared to receive them) if - again - it is to be a credible witness to Jesus Christ in this world. This includes the various charisms of both congregations and clergy, including (often overlooked) those discerning a call to ministry. It similarly includes the callings of communities who are struggling, in conflict, or anxious; even in those instances, God is working and working powerfully. Bishops don't need to have all gifts (they shouldn't), but they need to be perceptive enough to *find* the gifts that are needed for the good of the church as a whole. This work is, itself, a faithful witness to the grace of baptism.

For me personally, this ecumenical partnership served as a reminder: we do not go it alone, and we need other people - even those with whom we disagree - to gather around our shared witness. This is the Gospel that we confess in a nutshell: we are not alone, ever, nor can we allow the world to be. Baptism reminds us of this and (blessedly) calls us to live it anew every day.