



Reflections and Position Descriptions

Reflections

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Committee members, and
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Position Descriptions

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Reflections on Service to the Southeastern Iowa Synod as a Lay Person

When Pr. Katherine Dutton first asked me to be a candidate for Synod Council in the 1990's, my response was, "What is a Synod Council"? Although I had participated in various gatherings in the ALC, I had little knowledge of the structure of the relatively new ELCA. Once I was elected, I immediately began to see how synodical lay service could be both challenging and rewarding. I certainly felt like I was contributing my time and effort to an entity that was about doing God's work in the world. That was affirming. I have continued to serve through the years with Bishop Paul Werger, Bishop Philip Hougen, Bishop Michael Burk and Bishop Amy Current. My participation taught me much and gave me many opportunities:

- 1) I was able to interact with Synod and Churchwide personnel and to see them as "real" people and dedicated servants of God. I have great respect for our leadership.
- 2) I was able to benefit from another source of hearing the Gospel. This was true in both a theological sense and a practical sense. I appreciated the opportunities to worship together with members of Synod Council and Synod Assembly. At times of strain in our local congregation, I was able to know that not all were in that situation and there would be a way through with help from synod staff.
- 3) I was able to appreciate the "big picture" of the intersection of the 3 expressions of the ELCA. Meeting people from across the Synod, across the nation, and around the world reminded me that we are not alone in our faith nor in serving our neighbor.
- 4) I was able to participate in Bible studies, listen to presentations, hear sermons, and participate in worship opportunities that I would not otherwise have had.
- 5) I was able to help lead workshops such as those on Racial Justice and to learn while doing so. Working groups like this afforded opportunities to get to know others from the Synod even better.
- 6) I was able to participate in decision making, sometimes on difficult issues, but always aware of careful discernment processes including prayer.
- 7) I was able to hear debates about theological, service, and social issues, all in a context of faith.

My reflection on being a lay member on the Southeastern Synod Council.

A major benefit I found of being on the Synod Council was getting to know more about the workings of our Synod and the Office of the Bishop and ELCA churchwide and how we are all connected.

In the past, I have held multiple positions on my congregation's council, and I have been our church administrative assistant for 11 years; but I really did not know that much about how the Synod Council worked or what they did.

During council meetings, we had wonderful worship by different pastors and lay members. There were educational sessions for us to learn what was expected of us as council members; that was extremely helpful. We received the agenda and meeting material before the meeting, so we could be prepared. I felt comfortable asking questions regarding the materials and that I would be heard.

While I was on the Synod Council, our congregation was without a pastor and part of my term was during Covid, and it was great talking with other members of the council that were going through similar things. It was a great networking opportunity and I got to meet a lot of wonderful people.

I was able to share with my congregation, and engage them, to help support what is happening in our synod and synod's missions.

It was wonderful learning about everything our Synod does: Mission support, Congregation Support, ELCA Churchwide support, etc.

The Holy Spirit gathered us, by the means of grace, to do the work God would have us do in mission and ministry in the world. I felt being a part of the Synod Council helped strengthen me and helped me grow my faith in God's discernment for me.

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Reflections on Serving on Synod and Church-Wide Positions

John Bonte

Visitor to Synod and Church-wide Assemblies

Over the years, I have been a visitor to both Synod and Church-wide Assemblies. I have enjoyed being part of the Assemblies without any official responsibilities. At these meetings I have been able to meet new people and renew past friendships. I have occasionally had the opportunity to sing in the choir and to help with some of the tasks of helping with some of the organization of the Assemblies. I also have gained some knowledge of how the Church-wide and Synod organizations work.

The Synod Nominating Committee

I had the honor of serving on the Southeastern Iowa Synod Nominating Committee. I was asked to serve by Pastor Paul Ostrem, Assistant to the Bishop. The Committee met over Zoom several times in the Fall 2021. In addition to deciding who would appear on the official ballot for the 2022 Synod Assembly, the task was to find volunteers who would be willing to serve in various offices of the Synod. Although I have met several lay and clergy people in the synod, I was pleased to work with people that I had not met previously.

Synod Assembly Voting Member.

I was sent by my congregation to be a Voting Member. This was a high privilege with considerable responsibilities. In addition to tending to the business of the synod, there were opportunities for Bible studies, learning about the Synod's mission partners, and attending worship services.

Church-wide Assembly Voting Member

In 2009, I was elected by the Southeastern Iowa Synod to be a Voting Member of the Church-wide Assembly in Minneapolis. At this Assembly, we were asked to vote on several resolutions after much discussion and debate. In addition, there were Bible Studies and forums concerning several issues of the day. I also had the opportunity to sing in the Assembly Choir.

The focus on American Indian and Alaska Native People was a special part of my experience at the Churchwide Assembly in 2022. My eyes were opened to issues I wasn't aware of and the work that is yet to be done to bring more awareness Native issues within the church. I loved the worship service that included Native music and voices.

With our world changing in ways that may alienate youth and others, during the churchwide assembly it was challenging to see what steps we need to be taking now to positively impact church members and congregations. It's my hope that we will continue to work and pray together to find meaningful ways to continue to reach out to all.

Robin Doty

Position Description for Consultation Committee Member

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Church in America* outlines the qualifications, the terms of service, and the duties of the Consultation Committee

Qualifications to Serve

- Both lay people and rostered ministers are elected based on the number of seats allotted by the ELCA for our synod.
- Ability to travel to Phoenix, Arizona from July 28 to August 2, 2025.

Term of Service

- The 2025 Churchwide Assembly takes place July 28-August 2 in Phoenix, Arizona
- There will be meetings for this synod's slate of voting members in the months ahead of the assembly for preparation.

Duties

- Serve as the highest legislative body of this church.
- Attend plenary sessions of the churchwide assembly.
- Participate in worship, Bible study, and other activities of the churchwide assembly.
- Gather with the other voting members from this synod to prepare for the work of the assembly.

Practices

- The vice president of this synod serves as one of the lay voting members from this synod.

Experience

- Some knowledge of meetings using *Robert's Rules of Order* is helpful.
- Some knowledge of the workings of the three expressions of this church, or a willingness to learn.

Position Description for Consultation Committee Member

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Iowa Synod* outlines the qualifications, the terms of service, and the duties of the Consultation Committee

Qualifications to Serve

- Both lay people and rostered ministers are elected to serve as one of six members.
- Half of the members are rostered ministers and half of the members are lay people.

Term of Service

- Members of the Consultation Committee serve a six-year term.
- The Consultation Committee meets on an as needed basis convened by the bishop.

Duties

- Seeks to determine an appropriate solution to substantive issues between or among congregations when other measures have failed.
- Seeks to determine an appropriate solution to substantive issues between or among factions of a congregation when other measures have failed.

Experience

- Experience in conflict resolution is helpful.

Position Description for Nominating Committee Member

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Iowa Synod* outlines the qualifications, the terms of service, and the duties of the Nominating Committee.

Qualifications to Serve

- Both lay people and rostered ministers are elected to serve as one of six members in addition to the bishop and the synod secretary who serve ex officio.
- A desire to seek match gifted leaders with synod positions.

Term of Service

- Elected members serve two-year terms and are eligible to be re-elected.

Duties

- Develop an invitation strategy for gathering nominations from across the synod.
- Checking with home congregation pastors on all lay nominees to determine suitability for serving.
- Gathering profile data for all nominees.

Experience

- Knowledge of the position descriptions for the elected seats.

Position Description for Synod Council Member

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Iowa Synod* outlines the qualifications, the terms of service, and the duties of the synod council members.

Qualifications to Serve

- Both lay people and rostered ministers are elected from one of six synod ministry areas or at-large based on the schedule developed with the 2018 adopted governance pattern.
- Synod Council members do not receive pay for their service.

Term of Service

- Other than youth members, all others serve a four-year term.
- Youth members serve a two-year term.
- Members are not eligible to serve more than one consecutive term.

Duties

- Serve as the board of directors for the synod with legislative authority between assemblies.
- Recommend program goals and a budget to the synod assembly.
- Develop a long-range vision according to synod priorities.
- Manage the roster including extending synod council calls.
- Make committee appointments.
- Carry out the resolutions adopted by the assembly.
- Elect persons to serve in synod professional staff positions.

Practices

- The synod council meets on Saturdays either in person or online in July, September, December, February, and April.
- Synod council members serve as at-large voting members of the synod assembly unless elected to serve by their home congregation.
- Synod council members serve on behalf of the whole synod rather than a representative from their synod ministry area.

Experience

- Some knowledge of meeting using *Robert's Rules of Order* is helpful.
- Experience with online meeting platforms.

Position Description for the Committee on Discipline Member

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA* outlines the qualifications, the terms of service, and the duties of the Committee on Discipline.

Qualifications to Serve

- Both lay people and rostered ministers are elected to serve as one of twelve members.
- Half of the members are rostered ministers and half of the members are lay people.

Term of Service

- Members of the Committee on Discipline serve a six-year term.
- The committee meets on an as needed basis convened by the bishop.

Duties

- Conducts discipline hearings as outlined in Chapter 20 of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the ELCA*.

Experience

- Adherence to confidentiality is necessary.

Position Description for the Synod Vice President

The *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Iowa Synod* outlines the qualifications, the terms of service, and the duties of the synod vice president.

Qualifications to serve:

- Is a lay person who is a member of a congregation of this synod
- Is not paid for their service

Term of Service

- Serves a four-year term
- Eligible for re-election for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

Duties

- Chairs the synod council meetings
- Supervises the synod assembly planning committee
- May call additional synod council meetings
- Consults with the presiding bishop should there be a bishop vacancy to arrange for appropriate coverage
- Is an officer of the synod and member of the Executive Committee
- Serves as an ex officio member of the synod assembly
- Leads the executive committee efforts to resolve conflict relating to the bishop
- Receives referrals on matters of discipline from congregations and convenes the synod's Consultation Committee

There are also practices in this synod for additional expectations of the vice president.

- Attend churchwide assemblies as a voting member from this synod
- Meet regularly with the bishop for agenda planning and to discuss activities of the office of the bishop and synod
- Connect to the ELCA Vice Presidents Listserv to stay attuned to activities of other synods and suggest items for discussion or action in this synod
- Serve ex officio on other committees as requested by the bishop
- Lead the executive committee in an annual review of the bishop

Some experience or skills helpful to serve as vice president.

- Experience in chairing a meeting guided by *Robert's Rules of Order*
- Knowledge of the organization and polity of the three expressions of this church
- Ability to be a non-anxious presence at synod council meetings, synod assemblies, and other meetings and gatherings
- Willingness to support the bishop, office of the bishop, and whole synod by interpreting everything they do in the best possible light