

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM

### FOR BISHOP OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

Please include a digital head shot with this completed form. The form will not be accepted without a head shot.

1. Name: Karl M. Richard
2. Cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Current Position: Senior Pastor, St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Springfield, PA
4. Congregation Membership: St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Springfield, PA
5. Year of Birth: 1960
6. Date and Year of Ordination: 07/24/1987
7. Previous Positions: Pastor, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Applebachsville, PA 11/95 - 12/08  
Vice Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Raymertown, NY 11/94 - 11/95  
Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Poestenkill, NY 06/87 - 09/95
8. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):  
Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, MDiv, 1987  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry & Syracuse University, Syracuse, BS, 1982  
Herkimer County Community College, Herkimer, NY, AS, 1980
9. List up to five (5) current or past synodical or Churchwide activities that would inform your service as Bishop of this synod.  
Secretary, SEPA Synod, 06/2015 - present  
SEPA Synod Council, 05/2010 - present  
SEPA Finance Committee, 06/2010-05/2015 (chair 01/2014-05/2015)  
Dean, Upper Bucks Conference, SEPA Synod, 11/1997-10/2003 (2 terms)  
LTSP Alumni/ae Board, 05/2005-05/2011

10. List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service As Bishop of this synod.

Member, Springfield Ministerium (ecumenical group) 2008-present

Member and former treasurer, Quakertown Ministerium (ecumenical group) 1995-2007

Member, Ethics Committee, Phoebe Richland Nursing Facility 2001(?) -2007

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. What gifts would you bring to the office of the Bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

I have been devoted to Jesus and his Church for as long as I can remember. I have a love for the Lord, and a desire to help people experience the presence of God. I have developed gifts for leadership, teaching, and communication of the Gospel and the work of the Church that have allowed me to bring others a clearer understanding of what our purpose is as the Body of Christ. I have had the opportunity to serve in various capacities in our Synod, as well as in ecumenical organizations. I have a deep appreciation of process and procedure as a way to be accountable in our ministry, and as a way to be consistent in how we operate as a body while we discern the Spirit's guidance. I am intuitive in my understanding of both people and the movement of the Spirit. I have been honored to use these abilities in service to Christ and the Synod in the role of Secretary. I am willing to use them in the role of Bishop if it seems good to the Holy Spirit and the Synod in Assembly that I do so.

2. What personal leadership challenges do you foresee as Bishop and how do you anticipate meeting those challenges? (1,000 characters maximum)

I believe one of the challenges for a bishop is to take care of one's self personally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. This job is too big for one person to handle on one's own, and so one needs to rely on others, and entrust some responsibility to them to assist in this work, much as Moses

needed Aaron, and eventually, the council of 70 elders. I consider myself to be a strong leader, but I prefer to work collegially rather than unilaterally. I, like many ministers, tend to work at times as though the entire Church depends on me. My wife, a Spiritual Director (though not my Spiritual Director) continually reminds me to let Jesus take some of this (since it is his Church), and take some time away from the busy-ness of ministry to be renewed in spirit, faith, family and friendships. I see a need for the bishop to surround her/himself with people who have knowledge and skills that complement the skills the bishop possesses, and seek advice and counsel regularly from others.

3. What do you see as the greatest gifts of this synod and how would you help grow these areas (1,000 characters maximum)

One of the greatest gifts of our Synod is our diversity. Not just racial and ethnic diversity, but also our cultural, political, historical, geographical diversity. We have so many types of people with so many different backgrounds in so many settings it amazes me. From Upper Darby School district with over 80 languages spoken, to the pressure and density of the City of Philadelphia, to the relative openness and "rural" nature of upper Bucks and Montgomery counties; from the 260 year old PA Dutch culture to current immigrant communities from Liberia we have many opportunities to live, learn grow and serve Jesus in this region. The fact that all of this diversity is in a geographical region where one can travel the fullest length of it in less than a day is also amazing, and a gift few areas have. Paul's image of the body and its many members come to mind. To EACH is given a (different) manifestation of the Spirit for the COMMON good. What better field in which to work for the Lord?

4. What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

Our Synod needs to avoid despair in light of current trends in our congregations. We need to find ways to stay positive, without taking an overly idealistic view of our life and ministry. It is true that for most of our congregations average weekly attendance is down. That does not mean the number

of people we reach is down to the same degree. Why are worship numbers down? Empty nesters who were weekly attenders now have the chance to travel. Younger new members have increased from C & E, but not to every week. Families have 2 rather than 4 children. How do we re-calibrate our metrics of "success?" How do we keep moving forward in faith? We stay grounded in the joy of Jesus, because we know Jesus is active and involved in this world. There are thousands who need to know the joy of Jesus. We need to invite people not just to the things we do, but into a relationship with the Lord of life. We need to not lose heart, and continue to "tell the old old story of Jesus and his love" today.

5. Tell us a favorite story about Jesus and how you use it in your daily life (1,000 characters maximum)

One of my favorite stories of Jesus is actually my sister's story. After our Dad died she was having a particularly difficult time dealing with it. One night she had a dream (vision?) that the phone rang. When she answered it, it was Dad. She asked how this was possible, and he said God knew she needed to talk to Dad, and God let Dad use the phone. Real? Imagined? Who knows, but my sister was able to sleep after that call, and I was filled with awe at the blessing of God. Jesus promises to be with us always to the end of time. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, reaches out to each of us in the ways we need, at the time we need, to assure us of his presence and the nearness of God's reign. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I follow Jesus, trusting that Jesus is always with me, leading, guiding, and encouraging me wherever I go.

**Please include a digital head shot with this completed form. The form will not be accepted without a head shot.**