

**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: Rev. Carlton Rodgers

2. Cell phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Current Position: Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

4. Congregation Membership: Tabernacle \_\_\_\_\_

5. Year of Birth: 1955 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Date and Year of Ordination: January 2002 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Previous Positions: Pastor, Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church, West Philadelphia \_\_\_\_\_

Dean of the Central Philadelphia Conference \_\_\_\_\_

System's Analyst, Defense Personnel Support Center (March 1980 - April 2003) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):  
MDIV, Lutheran Theological Seminary 2005 \_\_\_\_\_

BS Management, Drexel University 1977 \_\_\_\_\_

9. List up to five (5) current or past synodical or Churchwide activities that would inform your service as Bishop of this synod.

Dean of Central Philadelphia Conference (February 2011 thru March 2018) \_\_\_\_\_

Churchwide representative to the General Assembly in 2016 \_\_\_\_\_

Church wide representative to the General Assembly in 2009 \_\_\_\_\_

Member of SEPA Evangelical Outreach Team \_\_\_\_\_

Founding member of the Cobbs Creek Coalition of Lutheran Churches \_\_\_\_\_

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

Member of University of Pennsylvania's CHORDS Community Advisory Board \_\_\_\_\_

Member of the Sayre High School Community Health Center \_\_\_\_\_

President of Defense Personnel Support Center's Minority Male Alliance \_\_\_\_\_

### **PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

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

As a second career, African American pastor who was raised as a United Methodist and has been involved in the United Methodist and the ELCA candidacy processes, I bring a wealth of church experience, having been actively involved in a leadership capacity of one sort or another for the past 40 years. I also bring over 20 years of business experience in the information technology arena, having served as a systems analyst for the Department of Defense prior to entering the ordained ministry. As such, my life journey has afforded me the ability to see "outside of the box" in terms of where the Holy Spirit may be leading.

Throughout my ministry I have demonstrated an ability and a willingness to communicate and work collaboratively with others. I believe that these are essential leadership skills for those who seek to share the good news of the gospel with an increasingly diverse population in this new millennium.

However, the most important "gift" that I bring to the ministry is the gift of faith! My soul is nourished by the word of God and I stand on His promises as expressed in the Holy scriptures. "Faith in God" is what I teach and what I preach.

In a time when ministries are often measured in terms of worldly "success" (i.e. average weekly worship attendance, level of member giving, percentage of budget that is donated to mission support, etc.) I believe that God honors our faithfulness. In good times or in bad, we must endeavor to remain faithful Christians. Here, I am speaking of a personal and communal "faithfulness" as expressed in Micah 6:8, where the prophet says; " He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

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

The new bishop will inherit a number of challenges which will require a collaborative leadership style to adequately address. It is no secret that we are living in an increasingly secular society in which organized religion for many is no longer a priority. With approximately two thirds of our congregations in "decline", in terms of total membership and average weekly attendance, one of the top priorities for every church leader would seem to be developing a new marketing strategy to promote the church to a younger and decidedly "less Christian" demographic. The creative use of the various social media platforms that have become available will be a key to the church's future success and growth.

Secondly, the new bishop will need to understand that our most important missional priority at this point is domestic, not foreign. Studies are showing that more and more, the masses of people are moving back into the cities. Unfortunately, many of our city churches are no longer financially sustainable, and therefore are ill equipped to provide the type of dynamic ministry that is called for in this new church age. It is no secret that I am extremely passionate about urban ministry and will remain a major advocate for increased resources for city pastors, and city /urban congregations.

Thirdly, perhaps the greatest challenge to this church is inability to come to grips with its' lack of diversity. This church, and this synod in particular, needs to find new ways to embrace diversity in all of its various forms and expressions now. To this end, we must continue to support and encourage those individuals and groups that are trying to address the perceived racism that currently exists within our institution. By continuing to do "business as usual" and ignoring the perceived injustices that exist within the church, we are not being faithful to the gospel that we proclaim.

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

As I see it, the greatest gifts of this synod are its leaders (both lay and clergy), its inherent diversity, and its connectional structure. We have a dedicated group of trained clergy persons who are serving in our congregations. Unfortunately, many of these leaders are serving in struggling congregations that cannot provide adequate assistance to them in terms of salaries, health and pension benefits, or administrative help. The new bishop must seek to identify alternate ways of providing much needed assistance to pastors and congregations in need. This is obviously easier said than done.

Perhaps a portion of the solution would be to creatively deploy some of the many trained lay people and diaconal ministers in our synod to congregations that are unable to afford the additional staff personnel that they need to adequately minister to the members of the communities in which they serve.

Secondly, our synod needs to capitalize on the diversity that current exists within its borders. We have the largest number of pastors of color in the ELCA. In addition, we have a number of persons of color serving in various capacities and on various committees and groups within this synod. It is

incumbent upon the leadership of this synod to find additional ways to embrace this diversity and be a model for the other synods in the church.

Lastly, because of the relatively small geographical footprint of our synod, and the connectional structure of our church, the people and congregations of this synod are afforded the opportunity to work collaboratively and provide mutual support to each other in ways that are not possible in other synods. Experience has taught us that we can do more together than we can do alone. It is time for the leaders of this synod to exhibit the personal commitment and the political will to work together across cultural, socio-economic and political lines for the good of the kingdom.

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)

The principal challenge that I see is the need to help our local congregations to become relevant, or to remain relevant to the communities in which they are located in a time when organized religion as a whole is on the decline. There are no easy answers to this problem and the needed solutions will vary depending on the context involved. However, I remain convinced that "money" while extremely important, is not the primary issue. The primary issue as I see it is "obedience". I trust that if we can help congregations focus on doing the "Great Commission" and the "Great Commandment", with the Lord's help, our synod will be fine.

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 about Jesus is taken from the 14th chapter of the gospel of Matthew where the scripture records that Jesus came to the disciples one night, walking on the sea. Naturally, when the disciples saw this figure coming toward them, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" But the gospel writer tells us that Peter said, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water."

Jesus said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; But when Peter saw the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

I am an optimist by nature, and so I believe in possibilities. I use this story to remind myself and others of the importance of faith. I believe that we can do things that seem impossible if we have faith, and can keep our focus on Jesus. The faith of which I speak, applies to individuals but also to the church at large. This story reveals not only the limitless and transcendent power of God, but also our human frailty, and finally the ease by which we can become so distracted by our surroundings that we lose our ability to do what the Lord has called us to do. I truly believe that "we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us".

## Disclosure Form For Nominees

Out of care for this church, the following questions are asked of all who are making themselves available for election to churchwide office:

1. Have you ever engaged in, been accused of, charged with, or convicted of illegal conduct or a crime, including conduct resulting in suspension or revocation of your driver's license?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain on the attached paper.

2. Do you have any health conditions (physical or psychological) or any addictive behavior, including a history of drug, alcohol, or pornographic addictions that might interfere with your ability to serve or continue serving as a leader?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain on the attached paper.

3. Have you ever engaged in, been accused of, investigated for, sued, or charged with sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, substance abuse, child or spousal neglect or abuse, or financial improprieties?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain on the attached paper.

4. While on the roster, have you ever engaged in, been accused of, investigated for, charged with, or disciplined for any conduct proscribed in *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline*?

Never Rostered

Yes

No

If yes, please explain on the attached paper.

5. Are you living in accord with *Vision and Expectations* and *Definitions and Guidelines for Discipline* for rostered persons in the ELCA and do you intend to continue to live in compliance?

Never Rostered

Yes

No

If no, please explain on the attached paper.

6. Have you ever engaged in any behavior or been involved in any situations that, if they became known, might seriously damage your ability to begin or continue in leadership and ministry?  
 Yes  No If yes, please explain on the attached paper.

I have read the above statements and my replies are true and accurate.

CARLTON RODGERS

Print Name

Date: March 27, 2018

Signature: Carlton Rodgers

I have attached \_\_\_ additional page(s).  Yes  No

### Additional Information for Disclosure Form

Please provide as complete an answer as you deem appropriate on this sheet. Please make sure you number your answers to correspond to the questions. If there are more than one sheet, please number each page and note at the bottom "continued" prior to the last page.

Please write "Continued" if more pages