

**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: Serena S. Sellers

2. Cell phone number:

Email:

3. Current Position: Pastor of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kulpsville

4. Congregation Membership: Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kulpsville

5. Year of Birth: 1963

6. Date and Year of Ordination: June 4, 1989

7. Previous Positions: (one per line)

Conference Dean, Upper Bucks Conference

Pastor, Peace-Tohickon Lutheran Church, Perkasie

Assistant to the Bishop for Connections and Resources, SEPA Synod

Interim Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Lansdale

8. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first, one per line):

MDiv. The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia 1989

BS Degree MCL Speech and Psychology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 1984

Certificate in Peace Studies Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 1983

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

Synod Council and Finance Committee

Dean of Interim Ministry and Conference Dean (5 terms)

Assistant to the Bishop for Connections and Resources

Synod Candidacy Committee (7 years)

Churchwide Assemblies

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

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry (LAMP) Policy Council

Leader of "Global Plunge" tour for young adults to the World Council of Churches, The Lutheran World Federation and the Taizé Community and two trips to Tanzania

Adjunct Instructor at LTSP Teaching Emotional Systems and Conflict Resolution

Upper Bucks County Code Blue Shelter Volunteer

Leader of Weekly Stretch and Pray class for six years

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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

I am very grateful that most of the gifts I have were given to me by the church.

I know the riches of God's Word as the source and foundation of a meaningful and fulfilling life, and I have lived the joy of prayer as the conduit to God's life giving Spirit. In almost 30 years of service I've had the opportunity to pastor congregations of all sizes, as an associate, solo and senior pastor, both in interim and regular calls. I know intimately the joys and challenges of parish ministry. I learned the importance of vision and collaborative effort to achieve God's mission.

As an assistant to two bishops, and a participant in the ministry of the church nationally and internationally, I learned the value of our strength when we work together. Congregations, the Synod, Churchwide publications and the seminary have offered me opportunities to hone my skills as a pastor, teacher, preacher and leader.

I bring my experience, training, collaborative leadership, and my faith.

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

Our next bishop will be challenged to keep the focus on what is important, and not just what is urgent. The pace is fast, and crises occur, but keeping foremost what is essential is crucial. A bishop needs a spiritual director and the discipline of prayer to keep centered on loving people, not just activity. Setting clear priorities, ongoing communication with the staff, and delegation are fundamental to being effective and to maintaining a realistic schedule.

As a white, cis gendered woman, I am aware that I see an incomplete picture, and need the perspectives of others. A commitment to surrounding myself with diverse voices, and careful listening are vital.

Paper management is not my strength. I would rely heavily on the administrative staff in this area, as I do in my current role.

There will be challenges that cannot be anticipated. In all circumstances I rely on my faith, friends and family to keep me supported, and grounded in what matters.

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

- Our gifted and diverse people: I would strive to engage these gifts by inviting rostered and lay leaders into relevant service together as the body of Christ.
- The unity we share in commitment to three things, meaningful worship, people on the margins and hunger ministries: We could forge a public identity as a church that is feeding our communities physically and spiritually. A unified advertising campaign would lift our visibility.
- Our diversity is greater than most ELCA Synods: We need to build on this and commit resources to growing our outreach to people of color, and identifying and changing those things that are barriers to a wider welcome.
- Recognition that we are not growing, and are in uncharted territory, is a powerful asset: It gives us the necessary energy and urgency to take risks and make changes for the sake of the Gospel.
- The Gospel of Jesus Christ is our greatest gift: We have good news that the world needs, and grace that transforms lives.

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 greatest challenge to this synod in the next six years will be maintaining confidence in God's care for the church as old models of sustainable ministry fail and we venture into uncharted territory.

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, we will be tempted to complain, point fingers, and doubt God. We will remember the "Egyptian cucumbers" (*Numbers 11:5*) of overflowing Sunday School classrooms of the past, and may fail to share nourishing manna with the unchurched people surrounding our sanctuaries now.

We must turn our eyes to the future. We must offer support for lay and rostered leaders in developing effective outreach. We must develop resources that will assist struggling ministries in envisioning realistic options for their future, exploring renewing and sustainable possibilities. And we must foster a spirit of *faithful adventure and mutual support* as we walk together into the future that God is preparing. *God is with us!*

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

I love many stories of Jesus, but there is one story of Jesus that I come back to every single day.

It may seem cliché, but I need the story of Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the dead to remind me that sin and death don't have power over us, because love and life are bigger. Every day I need forgiveness, and every day I get it.

My personal mission statement for many years has been: "to be useful to God." Jesus paid for me. I belong to God. I try to make decisions based on whether or not a choice will make me useful. That is why I am not withdrawing from this process but will follow God's call wherever it leads.

If I am most useful to God at Christ Lutheran in Kulpville, then I say, "Thanks be to God." If I am most useful to God called to the office of Bishop, then with confidence that God will equip me I say, "Thanks be to God."

On the cross and in the resurrection Jesus teaches us how to give it all away and gain everything. That is truly gospel.

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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.

Serena S. Sellers

Print Name

Date: March 9, 2018

Signature: Serena S. Sellers

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