



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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Possible Nominees for Secretary of the ELCA

In January 2019 voting members were asked to identify up to three individuals who they believed could be possible candidates for secretary of the ELCA. The following individuals have submitted the proper paperwork to be publicly identified for this process. Please note this is not a nominations process. This is a tool for voting members to have more information in advance of the 2019 Churchwide Assembly. After the assembly passes the "Rules of Organization and Procedure" for the 2019 Churchwide Assembly, this document with the list of names will be removed from ELCA.org and the *Guidebook* app. A traditional ecclesiastical ballot will then be used for the secretary election. Voting members are welcome to download or print this information in advance of the assembly. The following names may or may not appear on the ecclesiastical ballot; additional names may be nominated to the ballot from the floor of the assembly. The Spirit will be present. This process allows preparation while also being open to how the Spirit may move.

The Rev. Paul A. Baglyos

Mr. John R. Emery

The Rev. Christopher Gaule

The Rev. Stephen R. Herr

The Rev. Peter R. Kowitz

Mr. Thomas E. Madden

Mr. Jeffrey Pennington

Mr. Rocky Piro

The Rev. Kwame Pitts

The Rev. Tyler D. Rasmussen

The Rev. Matthew L. Riegel

Deacon Sue Rothmeyer

Mr. Peter Severson

The Rev. Lamont A. Wells

Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Paul A. Baglyos

Current Positions: ELCA Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Regions 7 and 8 (2017 to present)

Congregation of Membership: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Baltimore MD

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 08/10/1958

Previous Positions:

2009-2017: ELCA Regional Coordinator, Region 3

2007-2009: Director, Center for Theology and Land, Wartburg Theological Seminary; Dubuque, Iowa

2001-2007: Campus Pastor, Thiel College; Greenville, Pennsylvania

1993-2001: Pastor, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Penbrook; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

1988-1993: PhD Graduate Student, University of Chicago

1984-1988: Associate Pastor, Redeemer Lutheran Church; Allentown, Pennsylvania

09/23/1984: Ordained

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

PhD: 1997, University of Chicago (History of Christianity)

MDiv: 1984, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg (Departmental Honors in Old Testament)

BA: 1980, Muhlenberg College; Allentown, Pennsylvania (Philosophy Major, magna cum laude)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Member of the Congregation Council and Co-Chair of the Stewardship Committee, St. Mark's Lutheran Church; Baltimore, Maryland

Member of the Lutheran Concentration Advisory Council, Princeton Theological Seminary

Past Board and Committee Membership:

While at Wartburg Theological Seminary I served on the Candidacy Committee of the Western Iowa Synod

While at Thiel College I served on the Ecumenical Relations Committee of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod

While at Zion, Penbrook, I served as president of the Penbrook ministerial association



Honorary Degrees:

None

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

Theological understanding

Breadth and depth of knowledge and experience regarding the ELCA and its Churchwide organization

Analytical ability

Communication skills

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The Secretary stewards the organizational coherence and integrity of the ELCA.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

While answers to this question will vary contextually, a general answer applicable to all contexts is that the key skill required for all church leaders is to "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). That is a "skill" in the sense that it involves intentional and disciplined cultivation.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

Engagement in spiritual direction

Composing, playing and recording music; playing, maintaining, repairing and modifying guitars



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: John R. Emery

Current Positions: General Counsel, New Mexico Human Services Department

Congregation of Membership: Lutheran Church of the Servant, Santa Fe NM

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/02/1956

Previous Positions: Deputy General Counsel, NMHSD 2015-2018
Assistant General Counsel, NMHSD 2014-2015
Arbitrator/Mediator, Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission 1999-2013
- Director and Trainer for conflict resolution programs
Private legal practice 1985-1999

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1982-1985 (Juris Doctor)

University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire, 1974-1979 (B.A., magna cum laude)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Lutheran Church of the Servant, Santa Fe NM - Congregation president

ELCA Committee on Discipline

Past Board and Committee Membership:

ELCA Churchwide Council, 2007-2013 (Executive Committee, 2011-2013)

Synod Vice President, East Central Synod of Wisconsin, 2005-2013

Wartburg Seminary Board of Directors, 2013-2014

Synod Council, East Central Synod of Wisconsin, 1989-1995

Synod Constitution Committee, East Central Synod of Wisconsin, 1989-1995



Honorary Degrees:

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

I have great love for the ELCA, its theology, its emphasis on global mission, its support of the marginalized and those suffering from natural and man-made disasters, and its history of ecumenism. I have been involved in leadership in all three expressions of the ELCA for many years. This gives me an understanding of the unique and important roles of congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization, and the issues and challenges faced by each. It also gives me an appreciation for the importance of communication, cooperation and collaboration within and among the expressions to keep the church vital and healthy. Professionally, I have training and a variety of experiences that I believe would serve the church well, from being general counsel of a state cabinet agency, to having been a labor specialist with an emphasis in training groups in collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The Office of the Secretary is largely responsible for the administrative functions of the ELCA, as custodian of its governing documents and records, as a resource for all three expressions on constitutional, legal, and organizational questions, and as facilitator of assemblies, meetings of the Church Council, the Conference of Bishops and other groups. In addition to overall management of the OOS and its staff, the Secretary also works with the synods and congregations by reporting to assemblies, assisting with elections and addressing legal and constitutional questions. OOS is the lubricant that keeps the ELCA running smoothly.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

Depending on their particular leadership positions, there are various skills that are necessary for leaders that aren't necessarily common to all. What is common to all is the need to be a good listener. Leaders in the church, in whatever capacity, are to be servants - of God, of the community, and of fellow members. To be a good servant requires the ability to actively listen to the voice of the Spirit, to the ideas and concerns of those who are served, and to the advice of those with more information, longer experience and greater expertise. Better listening leads to better outcomes and strengthens relationships, which are vital to the body.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

My approach to care for others comes from my perception of people as multi-dimensional. We all have needs for affirmation in our work and use of our gifts, as well as needs for personal time, family time, recreation, and spiritual growth. I try to respect others' needs in these areas and show sensitivity to their circumstances and shifting needs to focus on different life priorities at any given time. For myself, I try to set aside time daily for devotions, contemplation and nurturing my primary relationships, as well as trying to live a well-balanced life that includes attention to wellness, relaxation and pursuing my avocational interests, as well as my professional obligations.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Rev. Christopher Gaule

Current Positions: Pastor, Grafton Lutheran Church, Grafton, ND

Congregation of Membership: Grafton Lutheran Church, Grafton, ND

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 06/15/1978

Previous Positions:

Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Forman, ND

Co-President, Wartburg Associated Students, Dubuque, IA

Vicar, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Sacramento, CA

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Master of Divinity, Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA. 2002-2006

Bachelor of Arts in Music / Religion, Concordia College, Moorhead, MN 1996-2001

Current Board and Committee Membership:

*Unity Medical Center Board of Directors, Grafton, ND (2013-) (Vice-President 2016-present)

*Park River Bible Camp Board of Directors, Park River, ND (2015-) (President 2015-2018)

*Grafton Christian Ministerial Association, Grafton, ND (2010-) (Secretary 2011-present)

*Eastern North Dakota Synod - Grafton Conference Executive Committee (2011-)
(Secretary/Treasurer 2011-2013, Vice President 2013-2015, Dean 2015-Present)

Past Board and Committee Membership:

*Unity Medical Center Constitution Review Task Force (2018)

*Eastern North Dakota Synod Constitution Review Team, Fargo, ND (2017-2018)

*Eastern North Dakota Synod Assembly Minutes Committee (2015), Credentials Committee (2016)

*Red Willow Bible Camp Board of Directors, Binford, ND (2007-2015)
(Secretary 2008-2010, Vice-President 2010, President 2011-2013)

*Wartburg Associated Students Executive Committee, Dubuque, IA 2005-2006
(Co-President 2005-2006)



Honorary Degrees:

None

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

The gifting of God is more than skills or talents--it includes passion and vision. First and foremost, I love Christ and the church. I believe that the ministry of congregations is the indispensable means of God's kingdom advancement in the world. As a young-adult convert to Christianity and a college convert to Lutheranism, I am able to maintain ecumenical openness while holding Lutheran doctrinal convictions. As a pastor, I appreciate the stresses and challenges facing members of the rosters of this church and local congregations. I would bring that pastoral mindset to the Church Council, Conference of Bishops, and all gatherings which I'm privileged to attend.

All who have served on boards or committees with me know that I have not simply a tolerance, but an enthusiasm for (well-conducted) business meetings, parliamentary procedure, and governing documents, because I appreciate the structures, systems, and directions they provide towards our purpose and mission, believing the Spirit can use these to move us forward in ministry and mission.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The secretary and staff of the office of the secretary assist this church in fulfilling our mission through interpretation of, guidance for, and record keeping in accordance with our governing documents, policies, and rosters. As a member of the Church Council, Executive Committee, Conference of Bishops, and other divisions of the ELCA, the secretary is entrusted with examining and determining this church's vision and direction.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

A leader in the church must be grounded in their faith, so she or he may maintain their commitment to the ministry of the church in spite of the challenges often found while functioning in community. From that ground of faith, our church's numerous leaders can exercise their unique gifts, whatever they might be, for the building up of the body.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

I continue to grow in my practice of care for others and myself, recognizing that these ways of caring will always be in practice until the creator of the universe finally relieves or perfects these cares in the resurrection to eternal life. I attempt to care for others through caring conversations, while admitting my tendency towards teaching and advising. I care for myself through relationships with friends, colleagues, my wife and daughter, and the occasional diversion into fiction on the big screen or the small page (or e-reader).



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Stephen Robert Herr

Current Positions: Pastor, Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
(Lower Susquehanna Synod), 1999 - present

Congregation of Membership: Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
Congregation ID 01060

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 10/29/1966

Previous Positions:

*Pastor, Hebron Evangelical Lutheran Church, Blairsville, Pennsylvania (Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod), 1994-1999

*Dean, Gettysburg Conference, Lower Susquehanna Synod, 2009-2015

*Secretary, Gettysburg Conference, Lower Susquehanna Synod, 2006-2009

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Master of Sacred Theology, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg,

2011 Master of Divinity, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, 1994

Bachelor of Arts, Gettysburg College, 1989

Current Board and Committee Membership:

*President, Board of Directors, Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic 2008-present

*Reference and Counsel Committee, Lower Susquehanna Synod, 2010 - present

*President, Board of Directors, Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania, 2010-present

*Treasurer and Board Member, Gettysburg Community Theatre, 2010-present

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Churchwide

*ELCA Church Council, 2011-2017 (Executive Committee 2015-2017)

*ELCA Future Directions Task Force, 2015-2017

*ELCA Legal and Constitutional Review Committee, 2011-2017, Chair 2015-2017

*ELCA Churchwide Assembly Memorials Committee Co-chair, 2013 and 2016

*ELCA Church Council Board Development Committee, 2011-2017

*ELCA Church Council liaison to the Executive Committee of the Episcopal Church, 2012-2017

*ELCA Nominating Committee, 1999-2005

Synodical

*Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, board of directors 2003-2015

*Synod Council: Lower Susquehanna Synod, 2003-2005 and

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, 1997-1999

*Reference and Counsel Committee, Lower Susquehanna Synod, 2010-present

*Long Range Planning Committee, Chair, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, 1997-1999

*Minutes Committee, Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod



Honorary Degrees:

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

First and foremost, I would bring my faith in the Triune God. This gift of faith in God shapes my understanding of the nature of the church, the servant role of leaders within the church, and the significance of the church's ministry and mission. I value good process and the care of people. My experience of serving on churchwide, synodical, ecumenical, and local councils and boards shapes my deep commitment to fostering teamwork and nurturing the talents of others. My enthusiasm, industriousness, loyalty, and collaborative spirit are all gifts I would offer in service to this church as its secretary.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The secretary of the ELCA serves to connect and support the people and structures that assist this church in fulfilling its mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As interpreter of the ELCA constitutions the secretary functions to provide resources for good order and governance within the three interdependent expressions of this church. Maintaining the rosters of deacons and pastors, coordinating legal counsel, overseeing the arrangements for churchwide assemblies provide opportunities for the secretary and the entire office of the secretary to help foster and maintain the bonds connecting the ELCA. Entrusted with the sacred duty of record keeping, including oversight of the ELCA's archives, the secretary assists in keeping the church rooted with its history that shapes, instructs, and inspires the ELCA's present and future ministry.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

Faithfulness stands at the center of skills required to serve as a leader in the church. Anchored in God's steadfastness, faithfulness manifests itself in consistency, follow-through, dependability, transparency, respect and care for others in all interactions. A leader in the church recognizes both the sinful and saintly nature of all persons and institutions while at the same time striving for excellence within that reality. A faithfulness that values cooperation and trust in others' gifts and skills exemplifies the servant leadership witnessed in Holy Scripture and our Lutheran tradition.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

Caring for others is a key focus in my life and ministry. Getting to know people and accompanying them during both ordinary and significant moments in their lives has been an honor and joy. Personally, time spent with my family and friends brings me joy and energy. Opportunities for worship and prayer renew and center me. I am active taking time each week to run, swim or play basketball. I have an interest in studying, researching and reading history. Coaching high school basketball and enjoying movies with others refresh and energize my spirit.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: The Reverend Peter R. Kowitz

Current Positions: Pastor

Congregation of Membership: United Lutheran Church of Proctor, MN, Northeastern Minnesota Synod

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 02/16/1976

Previous Positions:

Pastor, Bethlehem and Immanuel Lutheran Churches, Proctor MN (2014-2016)
Sacristan, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia SC (2013-2014)
Intern, St. David Lutheran Church, West Columbia SC (2012-2013)
K-12 Music Teacher, Littlefork-Big Falls School District, Littlefork MN (2006-2010)
Church Musician, Littlefork Lutheran Church, Littlefork MN (2006-2010)
Youth Director, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Boise ID (2005-2006)
Self-employed Musician, Hailey ID, (2003-2005)
Music Teacher, The Community School, Sun Valley ID (2002-2003)
Choir Teacher, Bedichek Middle School, Austin TX (1999-2002)

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Master of Divinity, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia SC (class of 2014)
Bachelor of Arts (Music-Education and Religion majors), Luther College, Decorah IA (class of 1998)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Dean of the Lake Superior Conference, Northeastern Minnesota Synod
Co-Chair of the Russian Companion Synod Task Force
Member of the Synod Worship Team
Co-Founding Presenter of Theology Uncapped, a Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue series
Vice President of Area Churches Together, the ecumenical organization in Proctor MN

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Member of NEMN Synod's Ministry of Imagination Committee
Student representative on ATS Accreditation Review of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary



Honorary Degrees:

In high school I was voted "Most Likely to Host a T.V. Talk Show." (I guess I have always had a talent for facilitating a conversation.)

I received a Fund for Leaders Scholarship for my seminary education.

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

First, as a 43 year old second-career pastor, I am in that sweet spot between being an upstart rookie and already set in my ways. My older colleagues look to me for new ideas while my younger colleagues look to me as an example of the changing culture of call.

Second, I have a broad view of the ELCA, having actively participated in congregations in MN, IA, TX, ID, and SC. I grew up in a large urban congregation, attended an ELCA college, spent summers working at a Lutheran camp, was a youth director who brought kids to Youth Gatherings, played music for a congregation in a town of less than 700 people, and spent part of seminary at a church in the suburbs. Our church is amazing, and I've seen a lot of it.

Third, I understand that change is part of the church. I witnessed the sale of our small Bible camp to a larger camp, was on campus when LTSS merged with Lenoir-Rhyne, and as pastor led the consolidation of two congregations. I approach change with hope.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The secretary of the ELCA tells the story of the mission and ministry of the ELCA. Not only does the secretary collect data from congregations, synods, and the churchwide unit, the secretary also interprets that data for the good of the church. I believe that by adjusting what kind of data is asked for, and reporting less about demographics and more about discipleship, the secretary can change the perceived self-identity of the ELCA, from that of a declining denomination to that of a thriving, vital part of God's mission.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

A leader in the church must actively participate in promises of baptism. They are central to our identity as Lutheran Christians. When leaders live among God's faithful people, hear the Word and share the Meal, tell the good news, be servants like Jesus, and help bring God's Kingdom on earth, they are connected to the ways God is at work in the world.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

I care for leaders in my congregation by offering support and guidance while they are serving. Just as important, I release them from responsibility when their terms are completed. Active leadership can be draining. People should be able to step back, knowing that others will step forward to continue the work. I remind everyone that right relationships with God and others is what makes life good.

In order to care for myself, I regularly listen to music, attend concerts and shows, and spend time in nature with my wife and boys. Family vacations are usually planned so that we can attend performances and visit national or state parks. Delicious food and tasty beverages also help.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Thomas E. Madden

Current Positions: Executive Director and CEO, Lutheran Charities of Western New York

Congregation of Membership: The Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word, Rochester, New York

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 11/13/1959

Previous Positions:

Senior Principal Scientist and Group Leader: Eastman Kodak Company

Adjunct Faculty: Rochester Institute of Technology

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Master of Science in Electrical Engineering: Rochester Institute of Technology, 1988

Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering: Valparaiso University, 1982

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Vice President: Upstate New York Synod–ELCA

Chair, Worship & Music: The Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word

President, Board of Directors: Stages Youth Theatre, Rochester, NY

Secretary: Rochester Chapter, American Guild of Organists

Past Board and Committee Membership:

President, Alumni Association Board of Directors: Valparaiso University

Board of Directors: The Lutheran University Association, d/b/a Valparaiso University

President of the Congregation: The Lutheran Church of the Incarnate Word

President, Board of Directors: Inter-Lutheran Agency for Campus Ministry in the Rochester Area



Honorary Degrees:

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

A stalwart soul juxtaposed with a lighthearted spirit. Deep commitment to the Gospel with a heart and passion for the church. Leadership experience in commercial, academic, nonprofit and church settings. Executive-level proficiency in oversight and planning, administration and operations, board relations, communications and public relations, fundraising and event planning, financial management and compliance. Problem-solving skills grounded in curiosity and creativity. Constitutional experience ranging from reviewing, amending, updating and interpreting to the privilege of accompanying laity, clergy, congregations and a synod to live out the provisions and processes contained therein. I also bring a desire and capacity for continued growth and increased breadth in skill and service.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The secretary is called to a ministry of care for the ELCA by ensuring the integrity and efficient administration of the governance framework undergirding its expression of the Gospel. A public face of the ELCA, the secretary interacts with and supports many and various constituents including the administrative team, churchwide-organization staff, the Church Council and Conference of Bishops, synods, assemblies, and our people. While specific responsibilities of the secretary are well described in the constitution, on the whole, the role is embodied most profoundly and symbolically in the secretary's charge to be the custodian of the seal of this church.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

A leader in the church should ideally be one with gifts of virtue—wisdom and courage to know and do the truth, balanced with a capacity for moderation and fairness to act humbly and charitably. I cannot help but to strive for some measure of those qualities.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

especially the camaraderie and spiritual nourishment experienced in choral singing? My congregation's feeding and sheltering ministries provide opportunities for service and fellowship. To my continued surprise, I find myself exercising regularly at my community center. I've enjoyed success (and failure!) tinkering with the miracle of turning viniferous grape juice into wine, and the enjoyment and sharing thereof. And there's this ongoing pipe-organ project in my basement...



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee
For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Jeffrey Pennington

Current Positions:

- Executive Director, Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley (January 2008 - present)
- Secretary, Sierra Pacific Synod (August 2016 – present)
- Congregation Council President, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oakland, California (January 2016 – present)

Congregation of Membership: St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
1658 Excelsior Avenue
Oakland, CA 94602

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 08/18/1966

Previous Positions:

- 2008-2015 Co-director, European Union Center of Excellence, University of California, Berkeley
- 2005-2008 Assistant Director/Outreach Coordinator, European Union Center of Excellence, Indiana University Bloomington
- 2000-2001 Assistant Director/Outreach Coordinator, Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center, Indiana University Bloomington
- 1997-2000 Assistant Language Teacher, Hirosaki City Board of Education, Hirosaki, Japan
- 1994-1997 Program Officer, International Resource and Exchanges Board (IREX), Bucharest, Romania

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

- Ph.D. candidate (ABD), Kobe University Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies; Kobe, Japan
- M.A. in East European Studies, Russian and East European Institute, Indiana University Bloomington, 1993
- B.S. in Foreign Service, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 1988

Current Board and Committee Membership:

- Hungarian Studies Association, member of the Executive Committee (November 2014 – present), member of the Hungarian Studies Association Book Prize and the Mark Pittaway Article Prize committee (November 2015 – present)
- Secretary, Council of National Resource Centers (April 2014 – present)



- Consultation Committee, Sierra Pacific Synod (2013 – present)

Past Board and Committee Membership:

- American Hungarian Educators Association, member of the Advisory Board (2016 – 2018)
- Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), member of the Mentoring Committee (2015 – 2017)
- Sierra Pacific Synod, Synod Council Member-at-Large (June 2015 – July 2016)
- Congregation Council Secretary, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oakland, California (January 2012 – December 2015)
- Member, Congregation Council, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oakland, California (January 2011 – December 2011)
- Association for Japan Exchange and Teaching (AJET), member (1997 – 2000), chair (1999 – 2000)
- Church Warden, Anglican Church of the Resurrection, Bucharest, Romania (1995 – 1997)
- Lutheran campus peer minister at Georgetown University, Georgetown Lutheran Church, Washington, DC (1985 – 1986, 1987 – 1988)

Honorary Degrees:

Not applicable

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

I believe I would bring the following gifts to the office of secretary: a servant's heart, a keen eye for details, administrative and managerial experience, and a wonkish interest in policy and polity. My parents taught me from an early age to offer my time and talents to the church and to serve with an open heart. Both of them took turns serving on the congregation council of their church, and they inspired me to offer my own time and talents to the congregation and synod I now call home. I served four years as secretary of the congregation council, and now I am in my fourth and final year as president of our congregation. In recent years I have also become active in the Sierra Pacific Synod. In 2015 I was elected as a member-at-large on the Synod Council and also served on the Synod's Executive Committee. Then, in 2016, I was elected as Synod Secretary.

My current and previous "day jobs" have almost all been in the field of non-profit and educational administration and management. Much of that work is bureaucratic in nature, requiring attention to detail, especially when writing proposals and reports, and requiring skills related to project management and staff supervision. I have written successful grant proposals to the U.S. Department of Education and the European Union for multi-year funding packages, and then I have had to oversee the



implementation of those proposals and to report on them. My experience with staff supervision ranges from a staff of one to as many as seven. I am a strong believer in regularly scheduled staff meetings and open communication between staff members, and I am a proponent of continuing education and professional development opportunities for all staff.

As a member of a congregation council, and particularly as secretary or president, one by necessity becomes familiar with a congregation's constitution and begins to have a better understanding of—and sometimes even appreciation for—policies and polity. Similarly, when I became a member on Synod Council, I started to familiarize myself with the Synod's constitution, bylaws, continuing resolutions, and policies; and when I was elected Synod Secretary, I commenced learning them in earnest. And that's where it all began.

As Synod Secretary, I needed to become familiar with the *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, so I read through that. And that is where I thought it would end, until one fateful day when, as a member of the Synod's Consultation Committee, I was impaneled to serve on a consultation panel under Chapter 20 of the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. This meant reading Chapter 20 to understand the process, and once hooked, I just kept reading through the entire constitution. While not having committed it to memory "chapter and verse," I have come to have a better familiarity with and appreciation for the governing documents of the ELCA.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

In addition to the myriad duties outlined in the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the ELCA*, I believe a fundamental role of the secretary of the ELCA is to be a team leader and effective manager in a well-functioning churchwide organization. Policies and polity should exist to support the work of an organization, not to encumber it; and it takes a skilled and dedicated staff and teamwork to implement these policies for the good of the organization. Therefore, one of the primary roles of the secretary is to lead and manage staff in the Office of the Secretary. By contributing to the smooth operation of the churchwide expression of the ELCA, the Office of the Secretary can make it easier for congregations and synods, clergy and laity, to focus on the true mission of the church—to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, share the sacraments, reach out to our neighbors with good news, advocate for justice and peace, practice radical hospitality, and share the love of God in the world.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

In my opinion, the key skill required of a leader in the church is communication. A good leader must be comfortable with all facets of communication—not just conveying messages or ideas through speaking or writing, but also soliciting input and exchanging information, which requires that leaders also become good listeners. It is through



listening that we ascertain needs, learn if something is working or not, and acquire new ideas. Moreover, a good leader must seek out and be open to hearing various points of view, not just those that support their own opinion. Open lines of communication are necessary to foster team cohesiveness and to encourage the empowerment of others within the churchwide organization.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

Knowing that I can make more of a difference as part of a group rather than individually, I tithe faithfully to my congregation and contribute frequently to our Sunday-morning coffee hour fundraisers so that we can support ministries and service to our local community. As a member of the congregation council, I encourage the congregation to send a portion of the congregation's income to the Synod as mission support in order to sustain the Synod's own mission and ministry, and I know that the Synod likewise sends a portion of this mission support to churchwide to support churchwide mission and ministries.

As an only child whose parents live in South Texas, we care for each other through frequent phone calls and text messages, and I try to go back to San Antonio for family visits at least twice a year. My partner of fifteen years has recently returned to the Philippines to open a business, so we will be caring for each other through FaceTime and Skype calls, intermingled with the occasional long-haul flight for visits during vacation and holidays. My best friends live in Bloomington, Indiana and Fargo, North Dakota, so when virtual communication doesn't suffice, I travel to see them.

When it comes to self-care, I would break that down into spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional. I practice spiritual self-care by carving out time every day for prayer and meditation. As for physical self-care, I don't go to the gym or work out as much as my doctor would like, but I do try to go for brisk long walks when I have the opportunity. For mental self-care I am a voracious reader and keep up my reading in the foreign languages in which I feel most comfortable: Romanian, Hungarian, and German. Keeping in touch with family and friends and pursuing hobbies—music and travel—contribute towards my emotional self-care. I sing in my congregation's choir and occasionally play the oboe for service, and I have recently begun singing in two community choruses. While I wouldn't say that I'm an intrepid traveler, I am an avid traveler. My "happy place" is East Central Europe, and nothing relaxes me more than driving down the back roads of Transylvania.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee
For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Rocky Piro

Current Positions: Executive Director, Colorado Center for Sustainable Urbanism;

Associate Professor, College of Architecture and Planning, University of Colorado Denver

Congregation of Membership: Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church

*Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy):*05/26/1954

Previous Positions:

Manager, Department of Planning and Community Development, City and County of Denver

Program Manager, Growth Management Department, Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle

Manager, Intergovernmental Planning Team, King County, Washington

Teacher, Bishop Machebeuf High School, Denver

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Doctor of Philosophy, Urban Design and Planning, University of Washington, Seattle 1993

Master of Planning and Community Development, University of Colorado Denver, 1986

Master of Divinity, Christ Seminary (Seminex), St. Louis, 1980

Bachelor of Arts, Foreign Languages, Valparaiso University, Indiana, 1976

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Lutheran Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Representatives Network Board, immediate past chair

Religica Board

American Institute of Certified Planners Exam Committee

International Urban Planning and Environmental Association Board

Colorado Healthy Places Collaborative

Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division, American Planning Association, past chair

Sustainable Communities Division, American Planning Association

Sustainability Committee, Colorado Chapter, American Planning Association

Latinos in Planning, American Planning Association

Past Board and Committee Membership:

National Planning Committee, National Workshop on Christian Unity, past national chair

Ecumenical Commission, Northwest Washington Synod, past chair and ecumenical representative

Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue Team, western Washington

Divisions Council, American Planning Association

Planning Commission, City of Shoreline, Washington, past chair

Metro Vision Awards Committee, Denver Regional Council of Governments

Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality & Health Committee, King County

Safety and Aesthetics in Urban Roadway Design Interdisciplinary Committee, State of

Washington Continuing Education Committee, Washington State Chapter, American Planning Association

German Language School of Seattle Board, past vice president



Honorary Degrees:

Awards:

College of Fellows, American Institute of Certified Planners
Myer R. Wolfe Award for Professional Achievement, Washington Chapter, American Planning Association

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

Extensive experience in organizational development, policy and implementation; proven success in working in complex structures – with attention to detail, transparency and clarity; able to streamline procedures and offer fresh perspectives on best practices; able to communicate effectively and understandably both in writing and speaking.

Skilled as a long range planner with a commitment to advancing human well-being, sustainability, and social justice; able to work with groups and institutions on visioning and effecting change.

Thorough knowledge of ELCA relationships with full communion partners, our orders of ministry, and the histories of our predecessor bodies.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The Secretary serves a critical role in the overall administration of the ELCA, including local parishes, synods, churchwide divisions, and leadership offices. This requires an understanding of our scriptural and confessional understanding, the ELCA's constitution, and other governing documents.

It is important for the secretary to provide equal and just care for interpreting and implementing ELCA policies across the church body.

I would welcome developing new and fresh approaches for reporting on the ways in which the expressions of the ELCA minister to and serve the people of God.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

Leadership in the church is rooted in being a servant, that is one who follows Jesus' ministry of healing and making whole. The key skill is one of listening, assessing, responding, and acting. In a churchwide capacity, a leader also understands and works toward masterful resolution of complex issues.

How do you practice care of others and yourself?

My main source of care is rooted in my family – my spouse, my children and their spouses, my grandchild, and my extended family of cousins, aunts and uncles. I am a relational person and am nourished by friendships and collegiality. I am an avid reader and learner; I enjoy traveling and the outdoors, and I take pleasure in home gardening.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Rev. Kwame Pitts

Current Positions: Associate Pastor of Campus Ministry, half time

Congregation of Membership: Augustana Lutheran Church

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 11/14/1973

Previous Positions:

Interim Pastor, Redeemer Lutheran Church: 2015-2017

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Current: Ecumenical Doctor of Ministry (D.Min), Catholic Theological Union, 2018-2021.

Earned: Master of Sacred Theology (STM), Chicago Theological Seminary, 2016-2018; Master of Divinity (M.Div) Lutheran School of Theology, 2010-2015. B.S., Eastern Illinois University

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Lutherans Restoring Creation, 2016-2019; Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago Alumni Board, 2016-2020, ANKOS, 2018-present; Emmaus Road, 2018-present

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Lutheran Outdoors Ministries Center, 2011-2014



Honorary Degrees:

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

Previously before entering rostered, ordained life I was an Administrator serving nonprofit educational organizations dedicated to serving the wider community and towards a common good for all. There indeed is a necessity for the presence of the Administrator in many companies and especially in nonprofits, because it is the Administrator that keeps order so that the work flow and in this case, the ministry can move forward as flawless as humanly possible. I believe that is the role of the Secretary of the ELCA as well as being an asset to our Presiding Bishop and the many sisters, brothers and siblings in Christ and Faith who look to the office for vital information so that they know whether they are in sync with other congregations, what current trends are occurring in their sister synods and those particular highlights of how the church is growing. Historical information, is vital and current, correct statistics is critical as well as fascinating. As a public theologian, practicing active listening and hearing the stories from each of our synods and their congregations is always a fascination for me because it is not often we get to hear them. As a Pastoral Administrator, relaying this data to other partners within our national office then, assists them in the work that they are doing from education to justice work to worship.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

It is my understanding that the primary role as secretary of the ELCA is the keeper of various records, figures and demographics to be used in the daily life of our wider Church.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

Regardless of how we are called by the Holy Spirit to serve, a leader in the church must be visible, an active listener and participant; extroverted, knowledgeable and understanding; flexible, creativity and trustworthiness. Above all accountability and responsibility and a seriousness of the duties before them.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

As the current Campus Pastor at Augustana Lutheran Church, this year we are focusing on self care and wellness not only throughout this year but especially in this Lenten season. I have instituted everything from workshops for the U of C student body, to having discussions during our Adult Education hour and they range from mental health awareness, physical exercise and most importantly, spiritual wellness-all three of these are key in combating the rigors and the frustrations of life. Encouraging fellow sisters, brothers and siblings in Christ and in faith to have a partner that they can vent, or be accountable when it comes to doing physical activity such as yoga, running or swimming or engaging in ecumenical conversations about prayer and spiritual formation-another aspect that I am offering to the U of C student body regardless of how they connect with God. The important thing is to be that presence for all in need.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Rev. Tyler D. Rasmussen

Current Positions: Pastor

Congregation of Membership: Trinity Lutheran Church, Pleasant Valley (P.O. Coopersburg), PA

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/04/1984

Previous Positions:

Pastor, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Coopersburg, PA (7/2012-Current)

Manual Labor, Rasmussen Tiling, Harcourt, IA (1/2012 - 6/2012)

Pastoral Intern, Christ Lutheran Church, Dallas, TX (8/2010-8/2011)

Webmaster, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Chicago, IL (9/2007-12/2011)

Webmaster, CIRAS, Iowa State University, Ames, IA (6/2007-8/2007)

Webmaster, Iowa State University Office of Admissions, Ames, IA (6/2006-6/2007)

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Master of Divinity, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, Chicago, IL (2012)

Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance (Organ) with minor in computer science, Iowa State University, Ames, IA (2007)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Constitution Committee (Chair), Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Synod Council, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Executive Committee, Upper Bucks Conference (SEPA Synod)

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Executive Committee, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Constitution Committee, Beta Sigma Psi National Lutheran Fraternity, National Office

Constitution Committee, Beta Sigma Psi, Epsilon Chapter

Vice President, Beta Sigma Psi, Epsilon Chapter

Secretary, Beta Sigma Psi, Epsilon Chapter

Council Member, University Lutheran Church, Ames, IA



Honorary Degrees:

N/A

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

- As a rostered minister of Word and Sacrament, I bring an experiential understanding of the work of this church and the wisdom needed to use the depths of our faith in the work of caring for this church as an organization.
- As an avid constitutionalist, I have a great appreciation for and understanding of the role constitutions serve in this church. In my current role in SEPA Synod, I regularly assist congregations as they work to make these documents better serve and protect them.
- As an lifelong genealogist, I bring great knowledge and appreciation for the recording and preserving of our history.
- As a webmaster, I am keenly aware of how to serve in any role that meets the needs and uses the benefits of the 21st century.
- Previous secretary experience, including as supply for SEPA Synod Assembly and Synod Council.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

Though many things are included in the role of secretary, the primary task seems to be caring for the legal entity that is the ELCA, its synods, and congregations and its organizational history, serving as the voice within this church for how we use our organizational documents and the laws of this land to our fullest advantage in our ministry as the Church, guiding not only the churchwide organization but every level of this church in its faithful use of and physical existence in God's earthly kingdom (to use Luther's Two Kingdom's Doctrine).

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

Clarity. Different leadership roles require different skills, but in the role of Secretary of the ELCA, I imagine the most important skill is clarity. The secretary will be called upon for leadership in many other ways, but, in my experience, what the people are looking for from the secretary of the ELCA is the clarity that allows them to move forward in ministry with ease and assurance.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

Care for others: I have been identified by others with the spiritual gift of encouragement and counseling. I am usually keenly aware of who feels left out or excluded from a group and find myself working to make them feel welcome and appreciated. I am also proactively growing in my practice of showing appreciation to those who love or serve me.

Care for myself: My spiritual care comes in playing piano, evening prayer, reading scripture, and candlelight. My physical care comes through a healthy balance of social activities, personal hobbies, and communication with family, plus ever working to increase my exercise routine and being aware of when I need additional support in the form of counseling or pastoral care.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Matthew Lynn Riegel

Current Positions: Bishop, West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod

Congregation of Membership: St. Paul Lutheran Church, Morgantown, WV

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 05/10/1965

Previous Positions:

Chaplain, Lutheran Campus Ministry at West Virginia University (2000-2015).

Pastor, Trinity-Mt. Calvary Shared Lutheran Ministry (1994-2000).

Treasurer, WV-WMD Synod (2007-2015).

Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Blue), West Virginia University (c.2008-2015).

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, S.T.M., 2011

Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, M.Div., 1994

Gettysburg College, B.A., 1987

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Institutional Review Board, WVU.

Council, St. Augustine's House.

Board of Directors, Camp Luther.

Symposium for Evangelical Lutheranism in Appalachia.

Past Board and Committee Membership:

WV-WMD Synod Council (1997-2000, 2004-2007). ELCA Committee on Appeals (2009-2015). Board of Directors, Lutheran Theological Seminary Gettysburg (1999-2011). Board of Directors, Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp & Retreat Center. WV-WMD Synod Finance Committee (1998-2015).

WV-WMD Synod Committee for Outreach & Evangelism (1994-2000). Board of Directors, Birdsboro Ambulance.



What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

Faith is a gift. It is not an indispensable gift so far as being the secretary of a large non-profit is concerned. For that role, the many gifts that relate to the temporalities of the ecclesiastical estate are more useful to the corporation. Still, faith (that is not by my own reason or strength), tested by church life, not only sustains me but orders my life. Life in ecclesiastical leadership can be crushing (whether it be the life of a pastor or council president or bishop or secretary). Faith clings to the Christ who is the first word and the last word. Given that any good gift from God, even a church institution, can become idol, faith is the gift that keeps us truly sane, the sine qua non for properly dividing what is eternal from what is temporal, and, as consequence, that which allows us to engage the temporalities with faithfulness, energy, and in good cheer. To this, I would add scrupulosity, subscription to the Lutheran theological tradition, love of history, experience in regulatory compliance, and an unnatural affection for parliamentary law.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

13.41 of the Constitution of the ELCA tersely defines the role as "providing leadership, as specified in Chapter 11 of this constitution, and shall fulfill the normal functions of the secretary of a corporation." Said "normal functions" are enumerated in the subsequent bylaws, and, where not enumerated, they are described in the parliamentary authority (especially in RONR §47). Given that no one person can execute all these normal functions, the secretary oversees a diverse staff, depending upon their experience and counsel, working cooperatively with them and other entities throughout the three expressions of the ELCA as a support organ for this church.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

Making proper distinctions. For example, when a question is asked about "the church" (with a lower case "c"), are we talking about the church visible or, specifically, the ecclesiastical estate? Even if the latter, are we talking about "this church?" 1.02 of our constitution states that "this church," in our governing documents, refers to the ELCA, suggesting that "the church" (still with a lower case "c") refers to the ecclesiastical estate writ large, a term that includes all ecclesiastical bodies taken together as a whole. This may seem like hair-splitting, but the blurring of lines through ignorance, indolence, or intent can yield an Iliad of ills. Further, particular offices require particular knowledge and skill sets, but these support the making of proper distinctions.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

Classically, we divide care into two domains: spiritual and temporal. I have discharged the spiritual care of others through Word & Sacrament (which includes instruction and pastoral care) in accord with the offices of pastor, chaplain, and bishop. While not peculiar to the ordained office, the mutual conversation and consolation of the saints has been an important part of this work. For myself? I am a recipient of this same ministry. My discharge of the temporal care of others has varied dependent upon arena and the office (EMT/FF, seasonal park ranger, citizen, son, husband, father, neighbor, friend, employee, coworker, supervisor, etc.). Likewise, I receive. There is nothing spectacular here, and, yet, it is miraculous. It is quotidian, and, yet, it is the holy quotidian.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Sue Rothmeyer

Current Positions: Assistant to the Secretary/Executive for Office of the Secretary Administration

Congregation of Membership: Immanuel Lutheran, Chicago

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 08/01/1959

Previous Positions:

ELCA churchwide organization: Program Director for Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry; Associate Executive Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministry; Interim Executive Director for Division for Higher Education and Schools (DHES); Director for Campus Ministry; Director for Administration and Finance (DHES)

Lay Campus Minister, Iowa State University, Ames, IA

Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI

Administrative Assistant/Staff Coordinator, Holden Village Retreat Center, Chelan, WA

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

Master of Arts, Communication Arts/Rhetoric, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Bachelor of Arts, English and Speech Communication, Luther College

Current Board and Committee Membership:

Concordia Place (early childhood education/teen/senior programs) Board of Directors

ELCA representative to Luther College Board of Regents

President, Immanuel Lutheran Church Endowment Committee

Immanuel Lutheran Church Worship Committee

Member, National Association of Parliamentarians

Past Board and Committee Membership:

Secretary and member of Synod Council, Southeastern Iowa Synod

President, Oak Park Festival Theatre Board of Directors, Oak Park, IL

President, AMES/ISU YWCA, Ames, IA

President, Ames Women's Theatre Board of Directors, Ames, IA

United Way Board of Directors, Ames, IA

Center for Creative Justice Board of Directors, Ames, IA

Ames Community Arts Council Board of Directors, Ames, IA



Honorary Degrees:

While not a degree, it was an honor to be the first recipient of the Sue E. Rothmeyer Advocacy for Campus Ministry Award.

What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

It has been a gift to live out my vocation within the church, and I would bring the gift of my breadth and depth of experience within this church and its three expressions to the office of secretary. With degrees in English, Speech Communication, and Rhetoric, I bring oral and written communication skills to an office that tends to and interprets the official documents of this church. I'm geeky enough to have completed the coursework to become a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians and buy tickets to the Broadway production of "What the Constitution Means to Me," and spunky enough to know how to put all of that in perspective! While I can reference chapter and verse in the constitutions and policy manuals of this church, I value relationships and appreciate the ways in which we can call this church to reason together. My faith in the living Christ gives me the hope and courage to assist this church to be about God's mission in the world.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

Constitutionally speaking, the secretary is responsible for maintaining the official documents, the rosters of ministers, congregations, and synods, and the archives of this church; for providing legal and risk management services; and for managing churchwide meetings. Serving as a member of the Church Council, Conference of Bishops, and Administrative Team, the secretary engages in conversation and decision-making concerning the ways in which this church can best live into and out of its mission. Relationally speaking, the Office of the Secretary seeks to serve this church and its three expressions by providing prompt and helpful information and counsel in its areas of expertise when requested and required.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

A key skill required of a leader in this church is a spirit of discernment that (a) prayerfully invokes the presence and wisdom of God, (b) attentively listens to the voices of others, and (c) thoughtfully offers plans and possibilities for this church's decision-making bodies to deliberate upon as they seek to be part of God's mission.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

I love Luther's understanding of vocation which speaks not only of the vocation of work, but also of church, community, and family. As colleague, daughter, friend, alto in the choir, and member of the world community, I hope that sense of vocation encourages me to practice care for myself and others. I also believe that sense of vocation is expanded to the need for rest, reflection, and play, and enjoy the ways in which exercise, reading, relaxing with friends, enjoying theatre, and cheering on my favorite basketball teams (yes, I'm writing this on the brink of March Madness!) revive me in ways that help me to better live out my vocation in all aspects of my life.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Peter Severson

Current Positions: Director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry-Colorado, Rocky Mountain Synod ELCA

Congregation of Membership: House for All Sinners and Saints, Denver, CO

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 03/10/1987

Previous Positions:

- Administrator for Congregational Renewal and Campus Ministry, Domestic Mission Unit, ELCA Churchwide Office
- Coordinator of Worship & Music, Bond Chapel, University of Chicago
- ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) volunteer, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

- Master of Arts in Divinity, University of Chicago (2012)
- Bachelor of Arts in Religion, Princeton University (2009)

Current Board and Committee Membership:

- Colorado Social Legislation Committee (current chair)
- Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains Board of Directors (ex officio member)
- Joint Action & Advocacy for Justice and Peace Convening Table, National Council of Churches (ELCA representative)

Past Board and Committee Membership:

- Philip N. Knutson Endowment Board at St. Olaf College, 2012-2014
- Student Advisory Council, Office of Religious Life, Princeton University, 2006-2009

Honorary Degrees:

None



What gifts do you believe you would bring to the office of secretary of the ELCA?

I bring the perspective of an early-career millennial who came unexpectedly into serving the church through public policy advocacy. Through that work, I have increased my desire to build sound, trustworthy governing practices that let all God's people flourish to their fullest extent. I was born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and raised in an ELCA congregation, and I have subsequently lived in a variety of pluralistic contexts, including the Eastern Seaboard, Mountain West and southern Mexico. I have served in multiple expressions of our church, including both a synod and the Churchwide office, as well as being an ELCA Young Adult in Global Mission. I am gifted with a wide network of friends that includes many young leaders in our church, rostered and non-rostered. I have an academic background in the study of Christian ethics and politics, and I am fairly well fluent in Spanish with a working knowledge of Arabic and French.

What is your concept of the primary role of the secretary of the ELCA?

The Secretary is responsible for governance and administration across our church. This entails a high degree of accountability to the three expressions of our church with respect to these services. My perspective on this role is rooted in an ethic of procedural inclusivity. Governing documents, meeting agendas, and other administrative tools of this church are not blank slates, nor are they necessarily neutral with respect to which voices are automatically included, valued, and listened to. I believe the Secretary, along with all their office staff, has the important task of listening well to the broader church, ensuring that our church's stated commitments to inclusive practices are reflected in how we administer and govern our institutions. The best practices and procedures recommended by the Office of the Secretary carry weight across our church. It is important that the platform of this office reflects our highest aspirations and deepest values to allow congregations and synods to flourish in their witness to the Gospel.

What is the key skill required of a leader in the church?

One of the most important skills I can think of for a leader in our church is what I'd call epistemic humility. That is, having the self-awareness to know one's own limitations, even if you can't quite name them. This is all part of remembering that our Lutheran witness understands every person to be both sinner and saint. We are all limited by sin, but we are justified by God nonetheless as God's beloved. We should remember accordingly that none of us has everything figured out. It can be tempting for a leader of any kind in our society (no less in the church) to want to justify ourselves by what we achieve: the capital we accrue, the status we enjoy, the power we exercise, the acclaim we garner. But those things don't matter to God in the end. In fact, the Gospel says repeatedly that those are actually obstacles that can impede our ability to love God and our neighbor with our full heart. It is thus particularly important for those who hold leadership positions in the church to really embody humility, and to recommit to it daily. Humility invites a posture of receptivity to others, deep listening, and open-hearted consideration. These are the qualities that leaders in Christ's church ought to possess, in my view.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

I practice care for others in the way I show up in the world. Caring for my local community means showing up when needed for city council meetings and HOA meetings, getting to know my neighbors, voting in elections, and generally being aware of the issues affecting our community. Caring for my friends and family means that I show up to spend time with them often and to accompany them through life's ups and downs. For me, this includes lots of travel because my web of relationships extends across the country and around the world. I care for myself by doing things that bring me joy: singing in choirs, playing the piano and other instruments, hiking, biking, skiing, camping, and playing tennis. I revel in Colorado's wild natural beauty and spend as much time in it as I can.



Biographical Information Form for Possible Nominee

For Secretary of the ELCA

Name: Rev. Lamont Anthony Wells

Current Positions: Asst. to the Bishop/ Director for Evangelical Mission, Metropolitan New York Synod

Congregation of Membership: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Roosevelt, NY

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 07/19/1973

Previous Positions:

- Senior Pastor, Reformation Lutheran Church -Philadelphia, PA
- Interfaith Leadership Specialist, Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia- Philadelphia, PA
- Conference Dean, Northwest Olney- SEPA Synod- Philadelphia, PA
- Pastor- Atonement Lutheran Church- Atlanta, GA
- Lutheran Campus Pastor- Atlanta University Center- Atlanta, GA
- Assistant Pastor- Emmanuel Lutheran Church- Atlanta, GA
- Grants Administrator- State of Georgia Department of Family and Children's Services

Education with Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most current first):

- Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, 2018, Executive Certification- Diversity and Inclusion
- Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, MA, 2008, Executive Leadership Training Institute
- Emory University Center for Pastoral Services, Atlanta, GA, 2007, Clinical Counseling and Pastoral Education Residency (Level 2)
- Johnson C. Smith Seminary, Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Atlanta, GA, 2003
- Dual Degree: Master of Arts – Christian Education
Master of Divinity – Leadership
- Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA 1995, B.A – Sociology/Religion – Concentration: Urban Studies/Spanish

Current Board and Committee Membership:

- National President, ELCA- African Descent Lutheran Association
- Committee Member, ELCA Task Force for Strategic Authentic Diversity
- Rainbow PUSH Coalition-Church Initiatives, Board Member
- The Episcopal Church Urban Caucus Assembly, Ecumenical Member
- Morehouse College Board of Preachers, Member
- ELCA Multicultural Ministries Task Force, Member
- African Descent Strategy Team, Steering Committee



My social ethics and training always compels me to find ways of connection rather than focusing on divisive ideologies, rules and opinions. It is my way of being a true consensus builder.

How do you practice care for others and yourself?

I care for others through the ministry of presence by encouraging, supporting, and joining together with them in spiritual practices and simply having fun. Sharing the gift of laughter has been such a joyful and healthy experience while spending time with those around me. My aim is to fulfill my calling by meeting the various needs of God's people and by nurturing them to grow in faith. As an example, I intentionally collect unused toiletries from my hotel stays and create care packages to distribute to homeless populations in my neighborhood(s). In each instance, an opportunity for a divine human connection arises that becomes a mutual blessing.

In everything I do, I pray and I ask the Lord to help and guide me. Therefore, I practice self care of my emotional, mental, and physical well being by regular and daily devotion in prayer, bible study/reflection, monthly appointments with a life coach, weekly calls with three mentors for over 15 years, maintaining supportive family/friend relationships, and every attempt to drink water and exercise. However, I am most energized by sitting still in the sun near water. I hope to always remember to keep the Sabbath and remember these comforting words in, Romans 8:28, "...know that all things work together for good to them that love God..."

