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2022 Synod Assembly Nomination Slate

**denotes seeking election for another full term*

Synod Council

Position A: Lay Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

1. Ms. Karla Chamberlain – Grace, Lansing
2. Ms. Deanna Reid – Immanuel, Suttons Bay

Position B: Lay Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

3. Ms. Linda Wicander – Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant

Position C: Lay Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

4. *Ms. Holly Wohlfert – Trinity, Kalamazoo

Position D: Rostered Minister - Male (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

5. Pastor Neil Brady – Peace, Charlotte

Position E: Rostered Minister - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

6. Pastor Christina Bright – New Life, Spruce

Position F: Young Adult Leader - Female (unexpired term thru 8/31/24, elect one)

7. Pastor Kate Van Valkenburg – Bread of Life, Hudsonville

(No opposition – ratification of SC action)

Consultation Committee

Position G: Lay Leader - Female (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

8. Ms. Deb Richardson – St. Paul, Greenville

Position H: Lay Leader - Male (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

9. Jeff Andert, Ph.D. – Trinity, Battle Creek

Position I: Rostered Minister - Female (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

10. Pastor Martha Hartman Stuart – St. Paul, Alpena

Position J: Rostered Minister - Female (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

11. Pastor Betsy Kamphuis – St. Paul, Greenville; Settlement, Gowen

Position K: Rostered Minister - Male (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

12. Pastor Jack Ferra – Zion, Comstock Park
13. Pastor Max Miller – Grace, East Tawas; St. Paul, Au Gres

Nomination Form North/West Lower Michigan Synod

Personal Biography for Nominees for Open Synod Positions

Nominated Position (Select all that apply):

Synod Council

Consultation Committee

Name	
Address	
City / State / Zip Code	
Phone (Home or Cell)	
Email	

Experience	
Occupation/Vocation	
Education	
Home Congregation and City	

Synod Conference Alignment

Bay Area

Greater Grand Rapids

Traverse

Capital Area

Stony Lake

I Don't Know

Kalamazoo Area

Sunrise

2022 Synod Assembly Nomination Biographical Information

**denotes seeking election for another full term*

Synod Council

Position A - Synod Council

Lay Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

1. **Ms. Karla Chamberlain** – Grace, Lansing – Capital Conference

Occupation/Vocation: Retired from self-owned business

Education: Master's degree from Michigan State University

Past / Current Congregation Engagement: I grew up being a part of the Grace family. Over the years, I participated in Luther League, Sunday School, VBS, and choir. As an adult, I have served on the congregation council four different times for 3 years each, serving as secretary, vice president and president. My last term as president was during the retirement of our current pastor, so I was working with an interim pastor and overseeing the call of our new pastor. I have served as a SCS teacher and superintendent. My current positions are as church treasurer, Grade Executive Committee, and interim Bell Choir Director. I am a member of the Worship and Music Committee and have served on the nominating Committee, Finance Committee, Library Committee, and Christian Education. I am part of a group that volunteers to participate in the Sunday service when our pastor is on vacation and have given the children's sermon, the adult sermon and served as liturgist.

Past / Current Synod Engagement: This is a new experience for me. I am aware of the Synod and the role it serves. I'm hoping that, if elected, I can use my experiences and knowledge to further the outreach of the Synod.

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement: Grace has participated in the "God's Work, Our Hands" for three years. We are an inner-city church that strongly believes in ministering to our neighbors. I participate in keeping our Little Food Pantry (located just outside our door) filled with non-perishable food items and other non-food items so they are available at any time at no cost to our neighbors. I was involved in renovating our old parsonage for rental to Samaritans for housing for refugee youth that have aged out of family type services. I have supported Synod goals with financial contributions, like the oxygen generators, disaster relief and World Hunger appeals.

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: My desire to serve others is based on Jesus' command to care for others – particularly those less fortunate than myself. I taught public elementary school for 12 years and have owned and operated my own business for 30+ years and have experience with school and business-related topics. I have a good basic knowledge of church committees and how they function. I believe that my strongest gifts are God-given and include being inclusive and non-judgmental and willing to spread the good news of the Gospel.

Position A - Synod Council (continued)

Lay Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

2. Ms. Deanna Reid – Immanuel, Suttons Bay – Traverse Conference

Occupation/Vocation: Retail, Mom, and Clergy Spouse

Education: Texas Lutheran University, BA in Theology

Past / Current Congregation Engagement:

- Handbell Choir member, ELCA and United Brethren congregations
- Volunteer, meal packing for local and global hunger charities
- Volunteer, Dégagé Ministries in Grand Rapids
- Adult Sunday School & Women's Bible Study leader
- Women's Board member
- Outreach/Evangelism Committee member
- Family Life Committee member (congregational activities)
- Liaison from Immanuel Lutheran congregation to LIFT Teen Center in Suttons Bay
- Board member of LIFT (Leelanau Investing for Teens) in Suttons Bay

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- Attendee of numerous Youth Gatherings in Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
- Synod Assembly Registrar for Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod
- Office volunteer for Office Administrator, NTNL Synod
- Voting member to Synod Assembly in N/W Lower Michigan Synod
- Participant in "Intro to Social Justice" seminar in N/W Lower Michigan Synod

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement:

- Member of a Hotel Life Team for The National Youth Gathering in Dallas, Texas, 1991
- Attendee of The National Youth Gathering in San Antonio, Texas, 1988.

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: I am a lifelong Lutheran who witnessed my father in numerous positions of leadership and participation in my home congregation as a child and young adult. His love of his church and affinity for ministry to others had a profound effect on me. I attended Texas Lutheran University as an inspiring pastor, though I learned during those years that my calling in service to the church would be a different one. I served as secretary in congregations of multiple denominations: Presbyterian, United Methodist, and ELCA. I have participated in National Youth Gatherings and serving as a Voting Member to Synod Assemblies, inspiring me to bring what I learned back to my home congregations and share that knowledge through small group studies and committees. I am uplifted when I witness cooperation between denominations in my community of Suttons Bay, when my congregation participates in worship and community projects with our Congregational and UMC brothers and sisters. I have a love of organizing, as well as collecting articles and Bible studies that I save to share with any pertinent group I am a part of. And I have a love of prayer through coloring. Hopefully I will have the opportunity to share this form of meditation with the other members of the Council.

Position B - Synod Council

Lay Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

3. Ms. Linda Wicander – Immanuel, Mt. Pleasant – Bay Area Conference

Occupation/Vocation: I retired as Director of Student Services, College of Business Administration, Central Michigan University. I still love working with both students and faculty members. I am passionate about life-long learning for both myself and other people. I lead Road Scholar programs on Mackinac Island in the summer. I attend programs through Aquinas College's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI).

Education: I have a B.A. in English from California State University Los Angeles and an MBA from Central Michigan University. I completed Old Testament, New Testament, Judaism, Christianity, Ethics in the Bible, Gender and Sexuality in the Bible, and Historical Jesus at Central Michigan University. I graduated from our Synod's Lay Ministry Training Program in 2016. I am currently enrolled in Luther Seminary's School for Lay Ministry. I will complete the program in October 2022.

Past / Current Congregation Engagement: Current activities are Assisting Minister, Altar Guild, Stewardship, Women's Book Group, and Home Communion. Past Activities include Church Council President, Chair Adult Forum Committee, Chair Reformation Celebration, member of Congregational Life Committee, member of Campus Ministry, and Secretary to the CMU Wesley Foundation board.

Past / Current Synod Engagement: I served on Synod Council 2014 – 2021. I was a member of the Reference & Resolutions Committee, the Nominating Committee, the Bishop Election Committee, and the Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program Team. I am currently chair of the Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Program team. I completed the Spiritual Formation Program and the Group Spiritual Direction Program.

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement: Not applicable.

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: I am a strategic thinker; I enjoy being involved in the "big picture" and I enjoy planning and implementing programs and activities. I am a passionate Lutheran and passionate about our Synod but I am also very ecumenical in my outlook. I enjoy worshipping with different denominations and learning about different religions. Luther Seminary's School of Lay Ministry is very ecumenical; our program leader is an Episcopal priest, the students are from a variety of denominations including Lutheran, Episcopal, Baptist, and Catholic. They worship and serve in small and large churches in rural and urban environments. Their insights and experiences have given me a new appreciation of the diversity of Christian life. I am also learning "challenges" and "best practices" from my classmates and our instructors.

Position C - Synod Council

Lay Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

- 4. *Ms. Holly Wohlfert** – Trinity, Kalamazoo – Kalamazoo Conference

Occupation/Vocation: Registered Nurse (Retired)

Education:

- Bachelor's in Nursing
- Additional nursing course work at the Master's level

Past / Current Congregation Engagement:

- Past – VBS teacher, pastoral call committee, vocal choir member, bell choir member, President of Altar Guild, WELCA unit member
- Current – Vocal choir member, Altar Guild member, President of WELCA unit

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- Member of Synod Council since 2019
- Voting Member at past six Synod Assemblies

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement: Not Applicable.

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: My training as an RN has helped me hone the skills of compassion, attention to detail, critical thinking, patience, active listening and public speaking. My community of patients and the community of the Synod are comparable, and my training has been focused on promoting the health, wellness and quality improvement of the life of the community. I feel my strengths are in active listening, being able to see 'both sides' of an issue and sharing difficult concepts in a way that most people can understand. I want to support our Christian community in being the healthiest that it can be.

Position D - Synod Council

Rostered Minister - Male (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

Pr. Neil Brady – Peace, Charlotte – Capital Conference

Occupation/Vocation: Pastor

Education:

- Master of Divinity, Trinity Lutheran Seminary
- Master of Educational Administration, Saginaw Valley State University
- Teacher Certification, Central Michigan University
- Bachelors - Business Administration, Saginaw Valley State University
- Associates - Computer Operations, Delta College

Past / Current Congregation Engagement:

- Pastor, Peace Lutheran Church, Charlotte, MI: Sept. 2020 – present
- Pastor, Hope Lutheran Church, Marlette, MI: March 2020 – Sept. 2020
- Pastor, First English Lutheran Church, Wapakoneta, OH: 2014 - 2020
- Lay leader, Youth Director, Council President, Congregation Treasurer: Grace Lutheran Church, East Tawas (prior to 2010)

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- Synod Council, North/West Lower Michigan Synod (one term)

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement:

- Minister of Word & Sacrament on the ELCA Roster
- Delegate, Churchwide Assembly, Orlando, FL (1988)

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: Prior to entering seminary, my experiences and skill sets were focused in the business world and academic arena. As a pastor, my experiences include conflict resolution, driven mission focus, congregational growth, and youth. While a global perspective is important, the short-term end goals are what is needed.

My gifts and skills??? I've learned to be an effective listener; to establish priorities first and then act; to communicate in a concise manner; to address the needs of those I am called to serve.

Position E – Synod Council

Rostered Minister - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/25, elect one)

5. Pr. Christina Bright – New Life, Spruce – Sunrise Conference

Occupation/Vocation: ELCA Pastor

Education: B.A. – Michigan State University; MDiv – Trinity Lutheran Seminary

Past / Current Congregation Engagement: Pastor at New Life Lutheran – Spruce; North East Michigan Ministerial Association Member; Alcona Clergy Association Member; Habitat for Humanity of NEMI Board of Directors; Alcona Elementary School Volunteer; Alcona Humane Society Personnel Committee; AEA Concessions Volunteer

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

Current: Synod Council Member; Sunrise Conference Dean; Synod Consultation Committee; Synod Elections Committee Chair; Seminary Debt Reduction Assistance Team; Candidacy Committee Secretary; Trapp Grant Committee Chair; Revive Program Participant

Previous: Synod Discipline Committee; Outreach Committee Member; Nominating Committee Chair; Elections Committee Chair; National Youth Gathering Synod Day Team Member

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement: Minister of Word & Sacrament on the ELCA Roster.

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: As a lifelong member of the Synod, and now a pastor for 13 years, I bring a working knowledge of how the church functions on many levels (the good, bad, and ugly). I want to give back to the Synod that raised me and helped me be the pastor and person I am today. Being on Synod Council would allow me to do that in a small way, and it would be an honor to serve.

Position F – Synod Council

Young Adult Leader - Female (3-year term thru 8/31/24, elect to ratify Synod Council appointment)

- 6. Pr. Kate Van Valkenburg** – Bread of Life – Hudsonville (Greater Grand Rapids Conference)

Occupation/Vocation: ELCA Pastor

Education: B.A. in Psychology – Hope College; M.Div - Trinity Lutheran Seminary

Past / Current Congregation Engagement: Pastor at Bread of Life Lutheran Church, Hudsonville (June 2020-Present), Campus Minister for United Campus Christian Fellowship (July 2021-Present).

Past / Current Synod Engagement: I am currently serving on the synod's Disability Awareness Task Force. Appointed by Synod Council to fill an open 3-year term for “Female – Young Adult” at-large position in December 2021.

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement: Minister of Word & Sacrament on the ELCA Roster. Elected by the 2021 Synod Assembly to serve as a synod voting member at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly (Columbus, OH) in August 2022.

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: Raised in the Lutheran church, I have experienced the joys, the struggles, the traditions, and the evolutions. As a young clergy person, I believe I bring a unique perspective and set of skills to this role on synod council. I deeply believe in our religious tradition yet know the need for growth and intentional change for the church to best serve all people. I strive to find ways to honor our sacred traditions while embracing the newness of life.

Consultation Committee

Position G – Consultation Committee

Lay Leader - Female (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

7. **Ms. Deb Richardson** – St. Paul Lutheran - Greenville (Greater Grand Rapids Conference)

Occupation/Vocation: Retired Public School Teacher

Education: BS from Central Michigan University; MA from Central Michigan University

Past / Current Congregation Engagement:

- President of Congregation Council - 2006-2010
- Call Committee - 2009
- Member of Sharing the Joy/Evangelism Committee 2000-Present
- Choir Member 2010-Present
- Eucharistic Ministry Committee 2021-present
- St Paul Office Administrator (paid position) 2013-2019

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- Synod Assembly Delegate - 2020-present
- Women's Ordination Jubilee Committee Member

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement: Not applicable.

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: As a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Greenville, I have had the opportunity to see the church through many lenses. While serving as president of council we had an intentional interim pastor to assist us in preparing for a new pastor. Working with the interim pastor, we prepared a sometimes-divided congregation for the "Sharing the Joy of Christ" with a new spiritual leader.

I am also a former public school teacher and have had many experiences and opportunities to work with people with varied ideas, positions and interests. As a teacher, I also served many years as a negotiator which allowed me to come to consensus with people with differing needs and goals.

Position H – Consultation Committee

Lay Leader - Male (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

8. Jeff Andert, Ph.D. – Trinity – Battle Creek (Kalamazoo Conference)

Occupation/Vocation: Clinical Psychologist

Education: Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology

Past / Current Congregation Engagement: A life-long Lutheran, I grew up in the Central Lutheran Church congregation in Minneapolis, MN. Relocating to Michigan, our family have been members of Trinity Lutheran – Battle Creek since 1980. Congregational contributions have included:

- Active participation in vocal and instrumental music
- Church Council member
- Lay Worship leadership
- Redevelopment Team

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- Voting member at the N/W Lower MI Synod Assembly
- Synod Response Team focused on Clergy Misconduct / Sexual Abuse (1996-2016)
- Psychological Consultant to the Synod for the purpose of conducting ELCA required psychological evaluations of candidates for seminary admission (2018 to current)

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement:

- Serve as ELCA Psychological Consultant to multiple Synods and other denominations for the purpose of conducting required psychological evaluations of candidates for seminary admission

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: I bring my education and 45 years of practice as a clinical psychologist to understanding the individual and group dynamics which often arise for consideration by the Bishop. My 10 years of service to the Synod on the Synod Response Team on Clergy Misconduct / Sexual Abuse, the precursor of the Consultation committee, offered insight regarding the situations which require intervention. This experience provided a holistic view of such situations with a consideration for all parties involved and options for intervention. Such skills and experience are utilized in the context of my life-long Lutheran faith.

Position I – Consultation Committee

Rostered Minister - Female (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

9. Pr. Martha Hartman Stuart – St. Paul - Alpena (Sunrise Conference)

Occupation/Vocation: ELCA Pastor/Hospice chaplain

Education: M.Div

Past / Current Congregation Engagement:

- I have served my current call in ministry, with Hospice of Michigan, as a hospice chaplain for 23 years
- In my 30 years of ordained ministry, I have served three parishes as called pastor

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- I continue to be a called pastor within the synod with participation in synod assembly and connection within the conference

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement:

- Minister of Word & Sacrament on the ELCA Roster

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: As a hospice chaplain, I work within a multi-disciplinary team to provide support to people who experience emotional and spiritual distress. In this role, I am skilled at assessing concerns, providing listening, assisting people with processing their thoughts and feelings as well as developing a plan for themselves and their community of belonging. In this role, I am able to empower people who have differing understandings. I have gifts of compassion and insight that I utilize daily.

Position J – Consultation Committee

Rostered Minister - Female (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

10. Pr. Betsy Kamphuis – St Paul—Greenville & Settlement--Gowen (Greater Grand Rapids Conference)

Occupation/Vocation: ELCA Pastor

Education: B.A.; M.A.; M.Div.

Past / Current Congregation Engagement: I am presently installed as the primary pastor at both St Paul in Greenville (since 2008) and at Settlement in Gowen (since 2021). Prior to that I served as the primary pastor at Zion in Saginaw (2000-2008).

Past / Current Synod Engagement: I have served in the following capacities:

- Ordination of Women's Jubilee Task Force -- Chair
- Bridgebuilders Committee -- active member for several years including consulting as a team with a number of churches.
- Synod Council -- I am in my second term as a Synod Council member.
- Supervisor of Interns -- During my ministry in this Synod I have supervised 13 interns, including currently
- Lay Ministry Training Program (the predecessor to ELMM) -- Co Administrator for several years

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement:

- Minister of Word & Sacrament on the ELCA Roster

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: I have served in this Synod for 22 years, serving both in the Bay City/Saginaw area and on the western side of the Synod. I have had the privilege of learning the stories of a variety of churches and church members in the Synod through LMTP/ELMM and through my work on the Bridgebuilders Team. I am trained in Family Systems Theory which encourages us to look at the patterns of communication and relationships in any community rather than just at individuals alone. I am experienced in listening to multiple perspectives in any situation. I have been extensively educated in Lutheran theology and a Lutheran perspective, especially with regards to Jesus Christ crucified and risen, a theology of the cross, and grace. I listen and respond with both 'my heart' and 'my head'. I have lived in a variety of communities in my lifetime: Nigeria, West Africa, Missouri, Maryland, the Chicago area--both urban and rural. I appreciate the strengths, richness, and cultures of all of these kinds of communities.

Position K – Consultation Committee

Rostered Minister - Male (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

11. Pr. Jack Ferra – Zion – Comstock Park (Greater Grand Rapids Conference)

Occupation/Vocation: ELCA Pastor

Education: M.Div., M.S.

Past / Current Congregation Engagement:

- Have served as the "after pastor" in congregations following significant boundary violations
- Served on a staff ministry as Director of Pastoral Care (included visitation, provide clinical therapy, train laity to serve as grief counselors, educate families, young adults, seniors in the areas of development and enrichment)

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- Dean: Rhode Island Conference, S. York Conference (Lower Susquehanna Synod)
- Served on a Bishop's listening panel for congregational conflict in 3 congregations
- Chaired a New England Synod Bishop's Task Force to evaluate the structure and function of the Synod
- Supported congregations in Muskegon as they partnered to form a new congregation
- Chaired a Synod (Central PA) Committee for the Care and Support of Clergy and their Families

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement:

- Minister of Word & Sacrament on the ELCA Roster
- Intern Supervisor
- Chaplain and Presenter on Adolescent Suicide at Regional Youth Gatherings
- Chair of Corporate Ethics Committee (6 years) and Board Chair (2 years) Lutheran Social Services of South Central Pennsylvania

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: I think my experience as a clinical therapist, a pastor resolving congregational conflict, as well as development, and leadership in organizations of the Church, provides me with a rich perceptual background to draw upon for diagnosis and remediation. The same experience enables me to work with both insight and compassion.

Position K – Consultation Committee (continued)

Rostered Minister - Male (6-year term thru 8/31/28, elect one)

12. Pr. Max Miller – Grace - East Tawas & St. Paul - Au Gres (Bay Area Conference)

Occupation/Vocation: ELCA Pastor

Education: M.Div

Past / Current Congregation Engagement:

- Pastor at Grace Lutheran in East Tawas and St. Paul Lutheran in Au Gres

Past / Current Synod Engagement:

- Served numerous terms on the Candidacy Committee in the South Dakota Synod of the ELCA
- Certified in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Past / Current Churchwide Engagement:

- Minister of Word & Sacrament on the ELCA Roster

Gifts and skills you would bring to the position: A very critical thinker with the ability to defuse and debrief catastrophic events with a level cognitive refrain. In that critical thinking there is the ability to hold rational judgements and fair resolve.