

# 2019 Synod Assembly

## BISHOP Candidate Information Form

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**Candidate Name:**

The Rev. Margrethe Shizuko Chinen Kleiber

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**Current Position:**

Intentional Interim Pastor under call from the Metro D.C. Synod

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**Congregation Membership:**

First Trinity Lutheran Church, Washington D.C.

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**Previous Positions:**

Transition Pastor 2016 – 2019 (full time) Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Herndon, VA

Transition Pastor 2014 – 2016 (full time) Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Leesburg, VA

Transition Pastor 2012 – 2014 (full time) Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Fairfax City, VA

Interim Associate Pastor 2012 (part time) Community Lutheran Church, Sterling, VA

Associate Pastor 2010 - 2012 (full time) Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Falls Church, VA

Associate Pastor 2008 (part time) Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Falls Church, Virginia

Associate Pastor 2005 – 2007 (part time) St. Anne's Lutheran Church, London, UK

Asia Pacific Desk Director 2001 – 2004 Division for Global Mission, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (DGM-ELCA), Chicago, Illinois

Program Director for South Asia 1998 - 2001 Division for Global Mission, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (DGM-ELCA), Chicago, Illinois

Associate Pastor 1993 - 1998 Tierrasanta Lutheran Church, San Diego, CA



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**Date and Year of Ordination:**

August 22, 1993

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**Education and Earned Degree**

MSc Gender, Development, Globalization  
Economics, London, UK, 2006

London School of



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MDiv Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA,  
1993  
MSW University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI, 1984  
BA English Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1980

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

- Synod Assembly Planning Team Chair, Metro DC Synod, 2015 - present
- Synod New and Renewing Mission Table, Metro DC Synod, 2012 - 2014
- Synod Reference and Counsel Committee, Metro DC Synod, 2012 - 2014
- Synod Council, Metro DC Synod, 2011 - 2015
- Steering Committee, Commission for Multicultural Ministries, 1994 – 1998

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**List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.**

- Keynote Speaker, Asian Lutheran International Conference, 2019
- Contributor to God's Faithfulness on the Journey: Reflections by Rostered Women of Color, 2017
- Faith, Relationships & Technology Panel Moderator, 12th Assembly of the Association of Asians and Pacific Islanders of the ELCA, Monterey Park, CA, 2014
- President, ELCA Association of Asian and Pacific Islanders, 1995 - 1998

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**What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod?**

1. Administration/leadership: I am a strategic thinker and a planner who brings best practices to everything I do, including leading, managing, and administration. I set goals for myself as well as for the congregations and organizations I lead. I strive to be a wise steward of people's skills and talents and a judicious manager of time and money. I am organized and dependable.
2. Motivation/encouragement/exhortation: As an intentional interim pastor, I work with congregations in transition. I accompany them as they discern and clarify their sense of mission and call. This is a process that involves both affirming a congregation's strengths and challenging it to embrace the need for change. I believe that every congregation has a particular call with spiritual gifts, and I endeavor to bring out the best in the churches that I lead.
3. Faith: Jesus has walked with me for as long as I can remember. I have a lively prayer life that has sustained me through times of struggle as well as through times of great joy. I am



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convinced of God's love for me, for humanity, and for creation. This faith opens me to view the world with gratitude and to undertake my work with hope and energy.

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**What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it?**

While coping with change has been a theme in every age, the accelerated pace of change and the global scope of the changes we are experiencing today are unprecedented, as people, information, and commerce circulate more widely than ever before.

My training and experience as an intentional interim pastor have given me insight into the challenges facing congregations and pastors seeking to navigate change. In addition, my personal history as a biracial Asian American born and raised in Hawaii, coupled with my international experience as ELCA Global Mission staff and a Foreign Service spouse, have exposed me to the vibrancy of Lutheran witness globally and at the same time revealed how a narrow or ethnocentric understanding of the Lutheran transition can hinder our witness and fellowship.

### NAMING THE CHALLENGE

Our synod must address two key issues—one external, one internal—if we are to meet our principle goal of making disciples who love God with their whole hearts and who take the good news and care for our neighbors beyond the walls of our church building and into the world. First, we must adapt to an external reality that some have described as cultural climate change. We live in a digital world with 24/7 access to news, shopping, and entertainment, all of which compete for people's time and energy. We live in a market culture where everything is for sale, and for many, money bestows value and gives meaning to life, driving activities and choices for themselves and their children.

Just as organisms must adapt to changes in their environment, so too, our congregations must adapt to the demographic and cultural changes in their communities. Congregations need to rethink who they are called to serve and how they are called to proclaim the gospel. While there are no guarantees in this continually shifting environment, those congregations who recognize the need to adapt are more likely to flourish and grow than those who don't.

Second, we face an internal challenge of overcoming the anxiety that change often generates. Congregations must resist the temptation to turn inward and focus on mere survival.

I believe that congregations willing to take risks and to experiment with the ways they approach their mission in their communities will be the ones that thrive and bear fruit. The anxiety that accompanies change is real, but as we live into these demographic and cultural shifts, we can respond from a position of strength, led by the Holy Spirit and grounded in the spiritual practices of worship and prayer, generosity and service. We can grow in faith, hope, and love, discovering new opportunities for mission and outreach in the changes that confront us.



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### ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE

In my experience there are best practices around welcome and hospitality that we can cultivate. More important, we can intentionally nurture attitudes of resilience and openness to creativity and experimentation on the part of our lay and rostered leaders. I would seek to bring educational opportunities to our synod that will help our leaders and their congregations sharpen their sense of mission and equip them with new skills and best practices as we navigate an increasingly diverse and global environment shaped by the digital age. I believe that our primary investment must be developing and supporting adaptive and resilient leaders, and I would affirm leaders who are willing to take risks and experiment in mission. In addition, given that those who live in a community know it best, I would seek to leverage the local expertise of the conferences in planning for mission in their areas and providing input to the New and Renewing Mission team. Lastly, I envision deeper engagement with the conference leadership as part of an open dialogue that keeps the synod abreast of the unique opportunities and challenges facing our congregations and worshipping communities. This will strengthen planning for mission and the appropriate deployment of resources and staff support to new mission starts, existing congregational initiatives, and other ministries of our synod. As a synod, our response to the cultural climate change facing congregations must be multifaceted:

Grounded in Faith - It begins with our faith. Courage, it has been said, is fear that has said its prayers. The resurrected Jesus tells us, "Do not be afraid." We Lutherans have good news to be shared, and we have the Holy Spirit inspiring and calling us to proclaim this faith as we live into this time of cultural climate change. We are called to be accepting and welcoming communities in which the practices of worship and prayer, generosity and service, enable people to go out into the world with courage and hope. We have the freedom to adapt and change, and we know the grace that empowers us to experiment and to learn from failure and success. As God is our light and salvation, we do not need to be afraid.

As Lutherans, we have a proud tradition of love and service to our neighbors. Our faith challenges a myopic culture that frequently views human beings almost exclusively in terms of their economic value as producers or consumers and the created world as merely a resource to be exploited for profit. Located in the nation's capital, our synod is uniquely situated to publicly proclaim that human beings are more than just economic actors and that God's creation is more than spoils to be plundered. We are made in God's image and called for a purpose: the care and redemption of all that God has made.

This understanding has implications for the church's public witness and advocacy for justice. We must speak the truth that all people are created in God's image and resist any distortion or suggestion that some people are of lesser value. Since we are called to proclaim this truth out of care for our neighbors and the world God has entrusted to us, this understanding must



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inform the church's position on the issues of our day: immigration, gender, racial inequity, creation care, and the inclusion of the LGBTQIA communities.

Clarity in Mission - Our synod can challenge congregations to clarify their sense of mission and equip them to achieve it. Every congregation and worshipping community have unique gifts and a unique call. Identifying and embracing this call allows congregations to focus their energies and guide their decisions to move more confidently into the future.

The New Connections Campaign has been one of the most empowering initiatives that our synod has undertaken in recent years. It has spurred congregations to think about their mission and provided a variety of training opportunities to equip their leaders to help achieve it. As our synod moves into the future, we must follow through on the New Connections Campaign and introduce additional initiatives that similarly challenge and equip lay leaders and rostered ministers to plant new communities of faith and renew our existing congregations.

Excellence in Leading – Our synod has worked diligently to encourage peer learning and cultivate excellence in its rostered ministers and lay leaders. During the past few years, the synod has promoted several initiatives, such as The Journey, Intentional Impact, and Mosaix, as well as provided coaching for all leaders who request it. These kinds of initiatives need to continue because adaptive congregations need adaptive leaders. Rostered ministers and lay leaders can learn improvisational skills and best practices from each other. In addition, rostered ministers need practical skills to lead and to administer in times of change. The synod can continue to experiment with offering continuing education opportunities to rostered ministers through existing venues, such as the Bishop's Convo, conference meetings, and synod-sponsored workshops.

In a related vein, our synod must continue to identify and mentor a diverse pool of leaders for the church. We must support ministries that nurture a vibrant faith in our young people. We must engage pastors, deacons, and congregational leaders to continually seek promising candidates for rostered leadership in the wider church to build a healthy pipeline of talent. Furthermore, the bishop must maintain the high standards for rostered leaders seeking calls in the Metro D.C. Synod.

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### Describe your leadership style.

I am a high energy individual who brings passion and enthusiasm to everything I do. I am a collaborative leader who prioritizes team building and values the joy and synergy that comes with good teamwork. I put energy into developing trust and cultivating norms of honesty, commitment, and accountability. I remain calm under pressure, am decisive when the situation warrants, and consistently seek to empower others.

I am a lifelong learner and have regularly pursued education opportunities to stay abreast of trends, sharpen my skills, and deepen my faith. I seek to listen and understand the people I



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serve, as everyone, no matter how great or how small, has something to contribute. I strive to treat people with kindness and respect, even those I may disagree with.

I love God, I love people, and I love the saints God has gathered together as church. I look forward to serving God's church in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads.