



# 2019 Synod Assembly BISHOP Candidate Information Form

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**Candidate Name:**

The Rev. Leila Michelle Ortiz

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**Current Position:**

Assistant to the Bishop

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**Congregation Membership:**

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Gaithersburg Maryland

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**Previous Positions:**

Assistant to the Bishop for Mobility and Candidacy- 2016- Present

Associate Pastor: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Gaithersburg, MD 2014-2016

Pastor in Residence: Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Herndon, VA 2013-2014

Coordinator of the Latino/a Lay School of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America 2012-2014

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**Date and Year of Ordination:**

March 22, 2014

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**Education and Earned Degree**

Doctorate of Philosophy Candidate (All But Dissertation), United Lutheran Seminary- Present

Master of Divinity, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia -2009

Bachelor of Psychology, Wagner College, 2005

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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.**

Assistant to the Bishop for Mobility and Candidacy- 2016- Present

Member of the Theological Education Advisory Committee of the ELCA- 2013- Present

Theological Advisor and Chaplain of the Exploratory Committee of Women of the ELCA- Present

Board Member: Select Learning 2018-Present

ELCA Representative: Lutheran World Federation Theological Consultation (Wittenberg, Germany 2012 & Geneva, Switzerland 2016)

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# 2019 Synod Assembly

## BISHOP Candidate Information Form

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

Volunteer at Helping Up Mission

Volunteer at the Gude Drive Men's Shelter

Coordinator/Participant of "Building Puentes" Initiative between Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Gaithersburg, MD and Iglesia Luterana San Pedro, Toa Baja, PR) 2015-2016

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

I will bring my faith and confidence in the One who calls. I will bring genuine love for all people. I will also bring leadership experience as a lay member (children and youth director, council president), pastor, professor (college and seminary), synod staff, board member (Alumni Board of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia 2016 and Select Learning 2018-Present) and ELCA representative. While this experience and exposure to the many expressions of this church has given me the tools to live into this role, it is not what fuels my willingness to let my name go forward.

I heard it once said, "The church does not have a mission. The mission of Jesus has a Church." I have a deep love for Jesus and his mission: the Church. This love is what fuels my willingness. I care deeply for how the church shows up in the world as Jesus' mission on earth. God has lead me through many life and faith transitions and I've learned much on this journey. I've specifically learned, and now own the fact that I bring the perspective and advantage of being an insider/outsider in most spaces I enter.

As someone who is not a cradle Lutheran, I can still see the church as it is perceived and received from the outside. As one who has experienced theological conversion from Pentecostal Fundamentalist to Lutheran and liberated, I genuinely cherish Lutheran theology and tradition. It is what brought about my own spiritual and theological liberation. From this insider/outsider perspective, I can look at our church practices, processes, and institutional work critically and honestly. We can do better and we must. I can also defend the church passionately and sincerely. This church is flawed, broken and messy, and yet, the Holy Spirit IS present and working, with a word of healing, restoration, and liberation.

I believe that my experience and love for Jesus and his Church, will give me the courage to live into this call boldly, faithfully and with fierce commitment to the good, stirring, and transformative news of Jesus Christ.

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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?**

The principle challenge(s) facing the synod manifests in the following ways:

-Many of our congregations confuse "doing church" with "being church" and our world needs us to do a lot less and be a lot more.



# 2019 Synod Assembly

## BISHOP Candidate Information Form

-In many cases, who we say we are and who we actually are in and for community, is not in alignment.

-We have a hard time talking about Jesus, sharing the Gospel - the Good News - in ways that reflect our love and commitment to the faith.

-We have forgotten that a major part of our call is to pray and play; to take and give sabbath and have fun while we're at it.

-Our leaders, like most in our society, struggle with physical and mental health issues, burnout, and isolation and

-We have not capitalized on the gifts and expertise within our synod and sitting in our pews. I believe that leadership development, spiritual formation, and holistic support are key to addressing the challenges we face. Healthy leadership (lay and rostered) instigates, encourages and inspires healthy congregational and Christian life. It's healthy leadership that knows when and where to turn for help when they need a break, could use rostered or lay expert insight in regards to administration, stewardship, innovation, or when ministry demands difficult conversations around justice, welcome, and change.

Holistic support for our leaders would involve coaching, spiritual direction, counseling, therapy and all matters of resources to uplift and nurture spiritual and physical health. The greatest commandment is to love God holistically - with our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls. Our faith invites us to tend to ourselves in the same way and I would work to help facilitate and encourage these connections.

As a synod, we can be more intentional around conference and synodical retreats to nurture and model rest and restoration. It is also imperative that we designate time to play and pray; it is too easy for us to burnout without space for play and also too easy to be consumed by work and forget why, by whom, and to whom we are called. We must play. We must pray. Mainly, because our work and relationships should be grounded in a bold, daring confidence in Jesus, which invites us to take reflection and renewal seriously.

Intentional leadership development, spiritual formation and holistic support can help lift a mirror to our truth. These can also help us grow as individuals and leaders and open our eyes to ways we can do less and be more for the sake of our sanity, congregational health, vital ministries, and beloved world... and we ask God to help us.

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### **Describe your leadership style.**

I would describe myself as a transformational leader who is committed to the Church's role in the world and its institutional objectives. I'm a natural collaborator who believes in gleaning from the wisdom in the room. I believe in clear communication, setting goals, and motivating the people I work with to show up as their best selves in all they do. I also believe in co-creating space with my colleagues where honesty, mutual respect, and grace are central and rooted in the gospel.



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