



2019 Synod Assembly BISHOP Candidate Information Form

Candidate Name:

The Rev. Mark W. Olsen

Current Position:

Associate Director, ELCA Fund for Leaders (Mission Advancement Unit, ELCA)

Congregation Membership:

Peace Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA

Previous Positions:

- Pastor, Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Haymarket, VA (2010-2016)
- Director of Admissions, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (2006-2010)
- Senior Pastor, Peace Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA (2001-2006)
- Seminarian, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (1997-2001)
- Internship at Christus Victor Lutheran Church, Naples, FL.
- Civilian Intelligence Officer, Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC (1988-1997)
- U.S. Army Intelligence Officer, Defense Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC (1986-1988)
- Electronic Warfare Platoon Leader, A Co., 102d MI Battalion, Camp Hovey, ROK (1985-1986)



Date and Year of Ordination:

August 19, 2001

Education and Earned Degree

- 1997-2001, Master of Divinity (MDiv) Degree, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, PA; graduated with Divisional Honors in Pastoral Theology, Stewardship and Parish Ministry, and Theological Ethics.
- 1991-1995, Graduate Management Education Program, George Mason University/Defense Intelligence Agency, Fairfax, VA; completed certificate program in Public Administration.



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- 1984-1985, Military Intelligence Officer Basic Course, U.S. Army Intelligence Center and School, Ft. Huachuca, AZ; class Leadership Award winner.
- 1980-1984, B.A., International Relations, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

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

- Member (2010-2017) and Chair (2017-2018), New and Renewing Mission Table.
- New Connections Campaign congregational visitor and steering committee member (2016-2018).
- Churchwide Assembly voting member, 2009 and 2013.
- Chair, Synod Nominations Committee (2002-2007).
- Dean, Potomac Conference, (2003-2006).

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

- Participant, Prince William County community conversations on race and police relations, 2016.
- Pastor of host congregation and shared ministry activities with Covenant Community AME Church, Haymarket, VA, 2013-16.
- Haymarket Food Pantry volunteer, 2011-2016.
- Engaged in community organizing with precursor to Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICES), 2005-6.
- Engaged member of Fairfax County Faith Communities in Action (FCIA), 2001-2006; leader in Interfaith Community Dialogs following events of September 11, 2001, 2002-3.

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

- A deep and abiding faith in Jesus Christ on which my life and leadership are grounded. Our best days are before us, not behind us!
- I am a person of integrity; what you see is what you get (WYSIWYG).
- A commitment to justice, fairness, and equality in all human relationships and interactions, inside and outside of the church.
- The ability to communicate well, in speech, writing, and action, especially when complex matters need to be communicated in ways made easier to understand. My approach to corporate communication is to make it clear and complete, honest and transparent.



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- Whether personally, professionally, or programmatically, I thrive on making connections between people, ministries, and communities. In and through Christ Jesus, we are more than the sum of our parts and synergy will abound if we let it.
- I know the synod, have worked with most of our leaders and most of our congregations, and most of them know me. I have lived and shared the synod's history and I am committed to our shared life of faith. Together, with God's help, we can accomplish whatever we are being called to be and do.
- I am an adaptive, servant leader (more on my leadership style below).
- I am a strategic thinker and I am forward looking. I see the big picture, how we fit into it, and look for what's next.
- A problem solver, I work collaboratively to find solutions to those things (situational or systemic) that impede the effectiveness and success of mission of whatever team I am a part.
- I pay attention to detail.
- I am intentional. When time allows (and it usually does), I think things through before speaking or acting; I strive to respond rather than react; as I learned from my parents, "measure twice, cut once."

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

- Making and keeping the focal points for our ministry together both Congregational Vitality (vital congregations being communities of Jesus that nurture life-changing relationships with God, one another, and the world) and Leadership (identifying, calling, equipping, and supporting leaders). In each case, we need to move from diagnosing our problems and challenges to finding solutions and trying new approaches to address them. One way to do so will be to redefine "success" and "failure" in ways that emphasize and encourage the taking of risks for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of those who need to hear and experience that good news. As we continue to make new connections, we should seek to strengthen existing connections, build up the ministerium, foster greater collaboration, share lessons learned (within the synod and across the ELCA), work ecumenically, deepen our partnerships with the rest of the church, embrace an attitude of abundance and eschew one of scarcity. We need to collaboratively work to develop and equip leaders, invest in success, and create a culture of expectation to help us look forward in eager expectation to the amazing future to which God is calling us. I want us to dream dreams that are big enough to include God in them, claiming and living into our unity in Christ Jesus in the face of the increasingly polarized and divided society in which we live, helping people to know Jesus Christ, and not just know about Jesus Christ.

Describe your leadership style.



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- I am an adaptive, servant leader who works collaboratively with others, leading by example. I am intentional; listening; leveraging the collective wisdom of the whole; grounded in faith; making decisions based on whether or not they help people experience God's grace; striving to be a non-anxious, self-differentiated, connected presence. I'm a team leader who knows he can't do it all himself. My leadership style is contextual and situational.