



2025 Bishop Election

Reflecting Together in Mindful Preparation

Electing a Bishop

Bishops in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are elected to a six-year term. Bishop Candea has indicated that she will retire at the end of her term, August 31, 2025. Therefore, at the upcoming synod assembly, the Central States Synod will be electing a new bishop. The election process for a bishop is different from the election of other synod officers and council members. This document outlines the process that is prescribed in the synod constitution. A Bishop's Election Committee has been formed to shepherd the process leading up to and during the assembly. Presiding Bishop Eaton will also be present during the assembly to oversee and guide the election.

The Central States Synod Constitution:

S9.04. The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly by ecclesiastical ballot. Three fourths of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election on the first ballot. If no one is elected, the first ballot shall be considered the nominating ballot. Three-fourths of the legal votes cast on the second ballot shall be necessary for election. The third ballot shall be limited to the seven persons (plus ties) who received the greatest number of legal votes on the second ballot, and two-thirds of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. The fourth ballot shall be limited to the three persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the third ballot, and 60 percent of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. On subsequent ballots a majority of the legal votes cast shall be necessary for election. These ballots shall be limited to the two persons (plus ties) who receive the greatest number of legal votes on the previous ballot.

Prior to the assembly:

- Individuals who are open to the call to serve as bishop can make this known by filling out a [biographical form](#). This is **not a nomination process**. It is an opportunity for individuals to indicate their willingness to serve. Completed biographical forms will be made available on the synod website April 1, 2025.
- All eligible voting members must register to attend the synod assembly no later than May 15, 2025. There is no in-person registration.

At the assembly:

- Voting members must check in to receive their name tag. Only individuals who have registered as **voting members**, checked in and received their name tags will be eligible to vote in the bishop's election. Check in will close approximately thirty minutes before each ballot of the bishop election. These deadlines will be included in the published assembly agenda. Voting members need only check in once upon arrival.
- Bishop Eaton will give verbal instructions immediately before each ballot. Once instructions are given, the assembly will proceed into a time of discernment through song, prayer, and quiet reflection. Paper ballots will be used for each ballot of the bishop election.

The Ballots:

- **First Ballot (Nominating Ballot)**

The first ballot of the bishop election is a blank form with no nominations or candidates. Each voting member writes the name of any minister of word and sacrament on the roster of the ELCA thereby casting a vote for that person to serve as bishop of the synod.

- Individuals who have previously indicated they are open to serving as bishop are **not nominated** unless their name is written down on the first ballot.
- If one person receives three fourths of the votes cast, they are elected bishop.
- If no one is elected, the first ballot is considered the nominating ballot.
- Those nominated will be given instructions on how to withdraw if they do not want to be considered for bishop.

- **Second Ballot**

The names of all those individuals who appeared on the first ballot and who have **not withdrawn** their names will appear on the second ballot. Voting members will cast their vote by selecting one name from the list.

- If one person receives three fourths of the votes cast, they are elected bishop.
- If no one is elected, the assembly will proceed to a third ballot.

- **Third Ballot**

The third ballot will contain the names of the seven persons who received the most votes on the second ballot (including ties). Voting members will cast their vote by selecting one of the names from the list.

- Preceding the ballot, these individuals will each have five minutes to address the assembly.
- Biographical information submitted by these individuals will be available for voting members to review.
- If one person receives two thirds of the votes cast, they are elected bishop.
- If no one is elected, the assembly will proceed to a fourth ballot.

- **Fourth Ballot**

The names of the three persons receiving the most votes on the third ballot (including ties) will appear on the fourth ballot. Voting members will cast their vote by selecting one of the names.

- These individuals will each have an extended amount of time to answer questions presented by the Bishop Election Committee.
- Voting members will have the opportunity to submit questions the committee may use.
 - Forms to submit questions will be available at the check-in table and must be submitted for consideration by 7:00 p.m. Thursday.
- If one person receives sixty percent of the votes cast, they are elected bishop.
- If no one is elected, the assembly will proceed for a fifth ballot.

- **Fifth Ballot**

The fifth ballot will contain the names of the two individuals who have received the most votes (plus ties) on the fourth ballot. Voting members will cast their vote by selecting one of the names.

- The person receiving the majority of votes cast is elected bishop.
- The bishop-elect will have an opportunity to address the assembly.
- The new bishop will begin their term on September 1, 2025.

This process is intended to be one of discernment, praying for the guidance of the Spirit in calling the next pastor of the synod. Individuals are encouraged to visit <https://www.css-elca.org/discernment> to review the *Ministry Site Profile* developed by the discernment team, as well as the job description for the bishop.