



## **Synod Profile**

**February 2008**

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**Supporting Information (available online at <http://www.spselca.org/Profile/profile.html> and on the CD mailed to each congregation)**

1. Congregational Discussion Questions
2. Gatherings
  - Methodology and composition of groups
  - Overall Summary
  - Fresno Summary
  - San Mateo Summary
  - Lodi Summary
3. 5 Questions Online Survey Details
4. Churchwide Program Audit
5. Existing Information
  - Healthy, Multiplying Congregations
  - Bishop Mullen's Ecclesiastical Duties in detail
  - Leadership Discipling Team Listening Posts Summary and Recommendations
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8. Flipchart photos from Gatherings
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## How this Synod Profile Came To Be

When congregations are calling a new pastor they are expected to complete a congregational profile. This provides the members and the pastoral candidates an in-depth understanding of the congregation's history, its current status, its strengths and weaknesses, its opportunities and challenges, and its hopes for the future.

It made sense to Bishop Mullen to do the same for the Sierra Pacific Synod as it stands on the threshold of electing and calling the next Bishop.

In late summer of 2007, Bishop Mullen convened a special group that he charged with designing and completing a "Synod Profile." The Profile would then be an instrument to provide important information for those who have the responsibility to elect and call the new Bishop, as well as those who are suggested as candidates.

Bishop Mullen's hope is that the Profile will be a valuable aid in discerning the next Bishop, and will also ensure an informed process.

To the best of our knowledge, Sierra Pacific is the first ELCA Synod to create such a Profile.

### **Profile data sources**

The Profile Team decided to use four specific sources of information for the Profile:

- Three day-long gatherings of Synod members, representing as diverse a cross-section as possible.
- A simple on-line and paper survey, in English and Spanish, for any and all to complete.
- The "program audit" report conducted by the national ELCA staff in September, 2007.
- Existing information, including "Healthy Multiplying Congregations," the Leadership Discipling Team's Listening Post report, and information derived from conversations with Bishop Mullen

A complete presentation of this data is contained in the Supporting Information.

### ***How the information is presented***

The Profile Team evaluated all the data, searching for "themes" that appeared regularly throughout the sources. Our role was to listen carefully and objectively to determine those themes that came forward, and to reflect them.

The Profile is composed of 13 themes – issues which Synod members think must be addressed in the present and the future. These themes are presented in alphabetical order; not in any kind of priority. Each is followed by a few questions that might be used for discussion and asked of any candidate.

The Profile does not articulate a vision or direction for the future. But it became clear to the Team that it may well provide the groundwork for both, depending on the preference of the next Bishop and other leaders.

The Profile also does not describe “the leader we seek” as a congregational profile would. The Team decided that members of the Synod could determine what kind of leader is needed based on responses to the themes.

The appropriateness of the skills, qualifications, orientation, and experience of the next Bishop is best left up to members of the Synod as they evaluate the various candidates.

**Our hopes for this Profile:**

- It will be used across the Synod for discussion and discernment in congregations, among pastors’ groups, by delegates to the Synod Assembly, and in any other appropriate venue.
- It will be used at the Synod Assembly to elicit responses from the candidates for Bishop, and as a tool to evaluate those responses.
- Every candidate for Bishop will carefully and thoughtfully examine the content and then be prepared to prioritize the 13 themes and to expand on their reasons for doing so; and then describe how he or she would specifically address those priorities if elected Bishop.

After months of listening to members from many locations of the Synod and studying what we heard and saw, the Team is enthused about the possibilities that exist to build on our diverse communities, to raise leaders of vision and courage, and to make the Sierra Pacific Synod an example for all as we move forward in our faith and in God’s love.

Respectfully and prayerfully submitted by the Synod Profile Team,

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Dr. Beatrice Favre, St. John’s, Sacramento

The Rev. Joseph Leon, Pueblo de Dios, San Jose

The Rev. Jeff Thiemann, Saint Matthew, Walnut Creek

The Rev. Laura Ziehl, Cross and Crown, Rohnert Park

The Rev. Dale Sollom-Brotherton, New Beginnings Organizational Consulting, Facilitator

## Synod Profile Overview

We heard it in the conversations, we read it in the answers to questions, and we discussed it amongst ourselves: The Sierra Pacific Synod, at this moment in its history, finds itself standing in a mixed shower of promising opportunities and tough challenges.

So much of both is tied to the geographic size of the Synod and to its racial, cultural, intellectual, economic and theological diversity, from the streets of San Francisco to the mountains of Nevada, from the Redwoods of the north to the fertile fields of the Central Valley, from the center of technological discoveries in the Silicon Valley to the legislative halls of Sacramento, from the classrooms of the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union to the Sunday School rooms of our churches.

It is a Synod rich in material, educational and leadership resources; a Synod with tens of thousands of baptized, confirmed and communing members, with 204 congregations, of which 60 percent have fewer than 350 baptized members, with many talented and dedicated pastors and lay leaders; a Synod with numerous congregations involved in faith-based community organizing efforts, and with a growing potential for evangelism and outreach; a Synod where many are searching for their identity as Lutheran Christians, and where 30 congregations are currently involved in the call process, 18 of which are being served by interim pastors.

It is a Synod that has fifteen new ministries under development, including seven which are ethnic ministries, which is indicative of our diverse population and of our outreach programs. We can rejoice in the fact that the fifteen represent five percent of all the new starts throughout the 65 ELCA Synods.

It is a Synod in transformation. Therein, lie the challenges we uncovered at the gatherings, from the questionnaires, from the ELCA audit, from the Listening Posts, and from our own observations.

The issues are grouped into 13 themes, each of which reflects a wide range of thoughts and ideas expressed by both clergy and lay members who attended the gatherings or responded to the questionnaires. Each issue is explored at length in the accompanying documents, along with suggested questions that might be asked of candidates for Bishop.

The themes, listed here in alphabetical order are

- Bishop's Ecclesiastical Duties
- Call Process
- Care for the Pastors
- Communication
- Diversity
- Finances
- Geography
- Healthy Multiplying Congregations
- Identity
- Leadership Development
- Sexuality
- Staffing of the Bishop's Office
- Synod Structure

The voices and the pleas were clear: There is a need to create an environment of exploration and collaboration, an environment of service and stewardship and of a shared mission, an environment of respect for ideas that are different from our own.

Our prayer is that through this process, we, all of us who serve God as Lutheran Christians in the Sierra Pacific Synod, will embrace the changes that are needed to strengthen our foundation so that we can continue to grow in the light of the one who gave his life for us.

# Key Themes and Questions for Candidates for Bishop

## ***Bishop's Ecclesiastical Duties***

It was no surprise to the Profile Team that the Bishop's personal schedule is filled beyond capacity. But what did come as a surprise was the significant quantity of ecclesiastical duties and activities that are assigned to the Bishop specifically, not to his or her office. These duties are either mandated by the Synod Constitution or directed by the ELCA.

The list includes:

- Three National Bishop's Meetings per year
- Synod Council work and meetings
- The Professional Leaders' Conference
- Conference Deans' Meetings
- Crisis and Conflict Response
- Ordinations
- Synod Assembly preparation and participation
- Requests to serve the larger Church
- Region 2 consultations
- Region 2 mobility Conferences
- Chief Ecumenical Officer of the Synod

You will note, as the Team did, that this list does not include additional travel time, personal study, prayer and sermon preparation time, continuing education, visits to congregations, serving as a pastor to the pastors, church anniversary visits, working with various Synod groups, working with the call process, routine administrative tasks, and time spent with the staff. If the Bishop were to visit each congregation on a Sunday it would take at least four years, not counting any conflicting Sunday activities.

There are many other functions and activities assigned to the office of the Bishop and not to the Bishop personally.

Fulfilling just the mandated duties and activities, including travel time, can absorb approximately 50 to 70 percent of the Bishop's time. This may vary somewhat from Bishop to Bishop, depending on how much time is devoted to church crises and conflicts. And this does not take into consideration normal administrative tasks and other travel.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- How would you manage your available time, especially in light of the ecclesiastical duties and activities specific to the Bishop?
- How would you care for yourself – physically, emotionally, spiritually—given the high demand on your time?
- What other functions and activities do you think should be handled by the Bishop personally?

## ***Call Process***

The procedure of preparing for and calling a new pastor or other rostered individual is a time congregations are assured of connection with the Bishop and the Synod staff. At the gatherings in Fresno, San Mateo, and Lodi, and in the ELCA audit program report and in the online survey, strong feelings were expressed about this connection. The verbal comments were mixed, mostly positive, but with a still significant number of negative responses.

Whether positive or negative, the comments included such statements as, "This was the only time we ever had communications with the bishop's office and staff." Complaints about the length of time involved in the process were often heard, but many participants were complimentary about the assistance received from the bishop's office. The issue was at the top of the priority list at the San Mateo gathering. "Improve call process (more options on choices or information on having more choices)." Currently there are 30 congregations participating in the call process, 21 seeking a solo pastor, 4 an associate pastor, and 5 a lead pastor or co-pastor.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- What steps would you take to make the call process more efficient?
- What can the bishop's office do for small, rural congregations who find it difficult to fill the pulpit?
- What can be done to increase the pool of prospective candidates for openings in SPS?

## ***Care for the Pastors***

Comments throughout the process expressed a need for care for pastors, but not necessarily by the Bishop. One suggestion included the design of a specific peer support program with input from those served. There is often a sense of detachment from the Synod staff and this is exacerbated by the inability of the bishop and the small staff to be present in person other than during times of crisis. The report from the Leadership Discipling Team's Listening Posts expands on some of these issues.

There is a sense of ambivalence about the role of the bishop in dealing with pastors and their families. Should the bishop be strong in administration or should the bishop be strong in pastoral care?

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- Please define the role of the bishop in relationship to pastors and their families?
- What ideas, if any, do you have to create a program that would solidify the pastoral relationship between the bishop's office and pastors?
- Being a bishop calls for a great deal of interaction and team building, what interpersonal skills and experience in team settings do you bring?

## **Communication**

Communication is the broadest and most pervasive theme to surface in this process. It was identified as a crucial issue in and of itself, and emerges as a key factor in discussions of the strengths and weaknesses in other areas. Members appreciate the establishment of communications channels, such as the website and Byte of Synod, along with any information disseminated from the Synod Office, and especially visits from the Bishop or staff. At the same time, most communications efforts were frequently identified as inadequate or irregular. Participants often said that the gatherings, in and of themselves, were “positive” and made them feel they were “heard.”

Four essential areas of communication have been identified:

- face-to-face communication with the Bishop and staff
- digital/electronic communication
- information dissemination
- conceptual/contextual communication addressing mission and purpose.

In particular, congregations in our geographically dispersed Synod would like direct contact with the Bishop at times other than crises situations; an updated, easy to navigate, more complete website; a more effective way to let congregations and members know about the programs and resources developed by the ELCA or Synod; and communications from the bishop that clearly delineates purpose and direction.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- How, as the leader of the Sierra Pacific Synod, would you use communication and communication skills to inspire congregations and members to engage in the mission and purpose of the Synod?
- How would you increase the visibility of the Bishop and staff in this geographically dispersed Synod, so that congregations could experience more personal connections?
- What would you envision for the use and development of digital technology to provide effect communication throughout the Synod?
- What innovative means might you institute to assure congregations are fully informed about what national or synodical resources are available for their use?
- What system would you use to keep abreast of the major initiatives in the Synod and how would you make sure they stay in focus?

## ***Diversity***

The diversity of the Sierra Pacific Synod is well known. It is one of our greatest strengths, as well as one of our major challenges. The Synod is diverse geographically, politically, theologically, culturally, and in matters dealing with sexuality and sexual orientation. The majority of congregations are less diverse ethnically and socio-economically. One of the Synod's strengths is that it welcomes and encourages diversity, particularly at a synodical level. One of our great challenges is how to work with and speak for such diversity. It can create an "us" versus "them" mentality. It can also create a fragmentation that makes forward movement slow and, at times, difficult. And it should be mentioned that our self-understanding that we are diverse sometimes blinds us from seeing the ways in which we are not.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- How would you define "diversity" both in our congregations, and in our mission field?
- How would you address the blessings and challenges of a diverse Synod?
- How would you keep focused on the mission?

## ***Finances***

The Synod has a finite amount of financial resources and they are allocated to programs, events, staffing, overhead, and mission. Different groups sometimes see themselves as being in competition for funding. Some churches choose to withhold financial giving for various reasons, some have no idea how their giving is used, and some feel they are not getting an adequate return on their giving.

Since a budget is a planning document for the future, it and financial resources, have a major impact on all the other themes highlighted in this profile.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- How would you want to allocate and prioritize the financial resources of the Synod?
- What major or minor changes in budgeting and the budgeting process might you envision?
- How would you work with congregations who choose to withhold financial giving from the Synod?
- How would you inform congregations in the Synod about the use of their financial giving?

## ***Geography***

The Sierra Pacific Synod is one of the geographically largest in the ELCA, and includes the Silicon Valley, extensive agriculture lands, Pacific Rim opportunities, and the capital of our country's most populated state. This provides a large mission field whose energy can be captured for the sake of ministry. The Synod has rich educational resources, including Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the Graduate Theological Union. But the geography poses several challenges as well. The Bishop and Synod staff have to serve a vast area and many congregations feel disconnected from the Synod for this reason. The sheer size of the Synod, as well as its geographic diversity, can cause us to feel fragmented from one another and can make it much more difficult for ministry partners to work together. There is a perceived need for nurturing of congregation-to-congregation connections within the conferences. The size also affects several other key issues: communications, the call process, diversity, Synod structure and financial resources.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- What are the key issues facing the Synod in terms of its large geographical size?
- How would you address these issues?
- What specific ideas might you have about Synod structure that would address the challenges of our large geographic size?

## ***Healthy, Multiplying Congregations***

Building healthy, multiplying congregations has been a major focus of the Synod for the past few years. The document of that same name provides a detailed overview of the Synod's efforts in this regard, organized under the following categories:

- Pray First
- Lead by Example
- Plan for Mission
- Build up the Body
- See and Speak the Truth in Love

The Synod has had more new mission starts (fifteen in the past two years) than any other ELCA Synod in the country. At the same time, the Synod has a large number of shrinking and aging congregations, some which may not be viable, especially using "Criteria for Viable Congregations."

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- What would you keep doing and what would you change about the current Building Healthy, Multiplying Congregations program?
- Describe a "healthy" congregation.
- How would you approach implementing "Criteria for Viable Congregations"
- What would you do to help congregations engage in meaningful evangelism and outreach?

## ***Identity***

As a Synod, we are not always clear about our unique identity as Lutheran Christians. Those outside our fellowship seem even less clear about our identity. In Northern California and Nevada, we live in a multi-cultural, diverse, and secular region of the country. Outreach and Evangelism, especially in the development of Mission Churches, is a challenge since many in our area are unchurched, while the lines differentiating Christian denominations are often perceived as soft. Nationally and regionally, we are recognized by our work with Lutheran World Relief, by our seminaries, Hunger Appeals, and participation in Ecumenical or Interfaith organizations. As individuals, many members see themselves as part of a long tradition as the church of the Reformation, with a strong sense of identity and spirit of pioneering. However, there is a perception that those “outside” are not clear about who Lutherans are, the good work we do, or what we believe.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- As Bishop, how would you articulate our distinct identity as Lutherans in a contemporary, secular and diverse society?
- What do our Lutheran theology and a Reformation mentality mean in 2008?
- How does our Lutheran faith speak to young families? To singles? To an aging population?
- How do we keep “passion for the faith” alive?
- How do we address societal and ethical issues from a faith perspective?

## ***Leadership Development***

Capable leaders, both lay and clergy, are needed for the congregations of the Synod to be effective in deepening and sharing faith. Building “healthy, multiplying congregations” will be more likely to happen if there is good leadership in this direction. There is a desire to attract and equip more young leaders who will lead in new ways with new gifts, and thus help the congregations of the Synod to reach a younger population.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- What, in your mind, is effective leadership?
- How would you go about developing effective leadership in the Synod?
- How would you attract and equip a greater number of younger leaders?

## ***Sexuality***

The discussions and actions surrounding the ordination of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT) clergy have been contentious and divisive for the Synod. There is substantial confusion about what the Bishop is and is not empowered to do. Faithful members have very different opinions on how we should proceed. While those differences of opinion are strongly held and strongly stated, the Synod looks to the Bishop for leadership traversing these uncharted territories, both in the present situation and dealing with the consequences of any policy decisions made at the churchwide level. One dominant message that emerged is that we must “get on with it” and not be defined by this issue.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- Describe the key issues within the area of sexuality and how you would address them.
- What policies will you implement and/or advocate for the Synod and for the ELCA?
- How will you address the divisiveness within the Synod over this issue?
- How do you envision getting past this issue rather than being defined by this issue?

## ***Staffing of the Bishop’s Office***

The current staffing of the Bishop’s Office includes the Bishop and three full-time assistants (two of whom have served since 1988), plus three full-time support staff and one half-time ELCA deployed staff. There are diverse opinions (and lack of knowledge) about the Synod staff. Congregational members expressed a clear desire that the Bishop and staff be more present in their congregations, not just in times of crisis, transition, or when asking for money.

It is also recognized that the current staff possesses a vast amount of knowledge about the past 20 years of mission and ministry in the Synod that, of course, can be both an asset and a liability. There is strong support for a younger, more diverse staff, one perceived to be less bound to “the way we’ve always done it before.”

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- What is the purpose of the Bishop’s staff?
- How would you take advantage of the institutional knowledge of the current staff and, at the same time, create a “new” staff that is effective?
- How would you make sure that you and the staff are present in more congregations? To do what?

## **Synod Structure**

What does “Synod” mean? The term is used in different ways: One, the expression of the body of Christ through the ELCA presence in northern California and Nevada; another, the office of the Bishop. The role and the structure of the Synod as an institution are not clearly understood. The perception is that the focus of the Synod office is on addressing problems and that relatively little emphasis is placed on creating a vision for the future and leading the Synod towards that future. The Synod Assembly is viewed as an untapped opportunity to bring disparate groups together and lead them towards a shared mission and common goals. The conference structure works well in some areas and not so well in others. There is a sense that this Synod is unique within the ELCA, yet the potential to leverage that uniqueness has not been addressed.

### **Questions for Candidate for Bishop:**

- Describe the vision you have for the Synod and the role that the institution of the Synod plays to lead towards that vision.
- How would you align the structure and activities of the Synod with the priorities of the Synod?

## **How We Hope This Profile Will Be Used**

The objective of developing this profile is to assist the Synod in discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit in the selection of our next bishop. The profile is a result of significant conversations and analysis, as well as examination of data reported from various gatherings and from other material. Our hope is that the conversations will continue and that the profile will be used as a tool across the Synod to engage in meaningful discussions.

We envision the profile will be used in various ways by:

### ***Candidates for Bishop***

- Review the material and respond to the questions raised about the priority areas.
- Rank the 13 themes that have been identified in the profile according to your priorities.
- Describe the approach you would take to address the themes.
- Describe your past experiences and qualifications that demonstrate your ability to lead the Synod as it addresses the themes.

### ***Voting Members to the Synod Assembly in 2008***

- Read the profile and the responses from the candidates for bishop.
- Ask follow-up questions of the candidates.
- Pray about the future direction of the Synod and reflect on the responses from the candidates to decide which one you believe would best serve as our next bishop.

### ***Nominating Committee***

- Use the profile and the questions around each priority area to elicit clear positions from each candidate so that the assembly as a whole can make a decision about the desired direction of the Synod.

### ***Synod Council***

- Examine the themes raised in the profile and identify the key issues that should be addressed now so that the transition to the new bishop goes smoothly.

### ***Individuals***

- Take the time to read the profile, either online or in printed form, as well as the additional material available online, and make your opinions known within your congregations, especially to those members who will be voting delegates to the assembly. (Printed copies have been sent to every Synod congregation).

### ***Congregations***

- Use the PowerPoint presentation, available for congregational use with speaker notes, to reflect on the profile and the identified 13 themes to determine the priorities for ministry, needs from the Synod, and connections to others in the Synod.
- Use the Discussion Questions that are included in the profile as a starting point for conversations regarding the future priorities of the Synod.

### ***Conferences***

- Review the profile at a conference gathering.
- Use the Discussion Questions as a way of thinking about the future of the Synod and the conferences, and how the conferences can participate in addressing the key priorities.

## Congregational Discussion Questions

The 13 themes below represent the synthesis of much conversation around our Synod about the current and future direction of our Synod and about the leader we seek in our next bishop. The Synod Profile Team heard 13 major themes and we present them to you for your consideration.

The questions below are intended to allow you to join the conversation. These questions are similar to questions that may be asked of candidates for bishop on or before the spring Synod Assembly. These questions may be used by your congregation in a number of ways:

- 1) To begin a conversation in an adult forum or other setting about the ministry of our Synod and each congregation's role in that ministry.
- 2) To inform people about the ministry of the Synod, both its challenges and its strengths.
- 3) As conversation and preparation with voting members to the Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly.

A hard copy of the Synod Profile has been sent to your congregation as well as a PowerPoint presentation and an accompanying CD containing many of the supporting documents used in this process. The same information is available online at <http://spsprofile.wordpress.com/> where you can download the files and extend this pioneering conversation across the Synod.

Please use these questions and the accompanying materials in any way that would assist your congregation and its ministry. Thank you for adding your voice to the conversation.

In Christ's service,  
The Members of the Synod Profile Team

### **Bishop's Ecclesiastical Duties**

- What do you think should be the priorities of the Bishop's time, especially in light of the ecclesiastical duties and activities specific to the Bishop?
- As you think about the work of the Synod, what functions and activities do you think should be handled by the Bishop personally?

### **Call Process**

- If your congregation were entering into a call process, what would you need and expect from Synod staff?
- What steps do you think could be taken to make the call process more efficient?
- What creative solutions can you envision for small, rural congregations who find it difficult to fill the pulpit?
- What do you think might be done to increase the pool of prospective candidates for openings in the Sierra Pacific Synod?

## **Care for the Pastors**

- How might the Synod staff, as well as congregations, support your pastor and your pastor's family?
- What programs or ideas might create a stronger pastoral relationship between the bishop's office and pastors?
- Being bishop calls for a great deal of interaction and team building. What skills and experience do you think are most essential for this task?

## **Communication**

- What communication from the Synod might be helpful to you as a congregation and as individual members of the Synod?
- What would inspire you to engage in the mission and purpose of the Synod?
- What kind of personal connection would you like to have with the Bishop and Synod staff?
- How do you think that connection might be best accomplished in our geographically dispersed Synod?
- What kind of digital technology might best assist in communication between your congregation and the Synod office?
- How might the Synod office best make synodical and national resources available to your congregation?

## **Diversity**

- How would you define "diversity" both in our congregations and in our mission field?
- What do you consider to be the greatest blessings and greatest challenges of our diverse Synod?
- How shall we, as a Synod, remain focused on our mission?

## **Finances**

- What do you think should be the priorities for the allocation of the financial resources of the Synod?
- What major or minor changes do you think need to be made to the Synod's budget and budgeting process?
- How do you think the Synod staff ought to respond to congregations who choose to withhold financial giving from the Synod?
- How would you like to be informed by the Synod office about the use of your financial giving?

## **Geography**

- What are the key issues facing the Synod as a result of its large geographical size?
- How would you like to see the next bishop address these issues?
- From the perspective of your geography, what specific changes might be made to the Synod structure to address the challenges of our large geographic size?

## **Healthy, Multiplying Congregations**

- Are you, as a congregation, familiar with a Synod document called, “Building Healthy, Multiplying Congregations”?
- Describe a “healthy” congregation.
- How might the bishop and Synod staff best be involved with a congregation on the edge of viability?
- How could the bishop and Synod staff best help you to engage in meaningful evangelism and outreach?

## **Identity**

- How would you articulate our distinct identity as Lutherans in a contemporary, secular and diverse society?
- What do our Lutheran theology and a Reformation mentality mean in 2008?
- How does our Lutheran faith speak to young families? To singles? To an aging population?
- How do we keep “passion for the faith” alive?
- How do we address societal and ethical issues from a faith perspective?

## **Leadership Development**

- As you consider the office of bishop, what, in your mind, is effective leadership?
- What kind of leadership do you need and expect from the bishop of the Synod?
- How, as a Synod, might we attract and equip a greater number of younger leaders?

## **Sexuality**

- What do you understand to be the key issues in the area of sexuality and how do you feel the bishop needs to address them?
- What policies, in this area, would you like to see implemented for the Synod and for the ELCA?
- What do you think should be done, by congregations and by the Synod, to address the divisiveness within the Synod over this issue?
- How might our Synod get beyond this issue rather than being defined by this issue?

## **Staffing of the Bishop’s Office**

- How do you understand the purpose of the Bishop’s staff?
- How might the new bishop take advantage of the institutional knowledge of the current staff and, at the same time, create a “new” staff that is effective?
- In what ways do you want to see the Synod staff present in congregations? To do what?

## **Synod Structure**

- What does “Synod” mean?
- What vision do you have for the Sierra Pacific Synod? How might the Synod office lead toward that vision?
- What do you think should be the priorities of the bishop’s time? How might the bishop and Synod staff align those priorities with the structure and activities of the Synod?