

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM:

NOMINEE FOR BISHOP OF THE NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

1. Name: Martha S. Sipe
2. Current Position: Pastor
3. Congregation Membership: St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Whitehall, PA, since 2003
4. Date and Year of Birth: 05/29/1964
5. Date and Year of Ordination: 08/30/1998
6. Previous Positions: Pastor, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Easton, PA, 1998-2003
7. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):
 - M.Div., Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 1998
 - M.M. in church music, Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ, 1989
 - B. A. in sacred music, Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA, 1986
8. List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.
 - Former Member and Co-Chair of the Synod Worship Team
 - Former Dean of the Northern Lehigh Valley Mission District
 - Visitor to our companion synod in Tanzania in 2009
 - Former member of the synod's Transition Team in 2008
 - Voting Member to Churchwide Assembly, (Orlando, 2005, Milwaukee, 2003)
9. List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.
 - Occasional volunteer in our local food pantry
 - Leader of a group drumming experience with community kids during summer program, 2019
 - Occasional participant in fund-raising activities (e.g. Bike for World Hunger, Out of the Darkness walk for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention)
 - Member of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem since 2006
10. What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)
 - Communication skills, in listening and responding. I am articulate in written and oral forms, formally and in informal conversation, able to ask questions to draw others into dialogue.
 - Ability to see conflict and adversity as opportunities for change and growth.
 - Administrative skills – the ability to visualize a goal and determine the steps needed to accomplish the goal.
 - A sense of healthy boundaries of my time. I know how to work hard, but I also know how to say no.



- Flexibility. Nothing ever goes as planned – and sometimes that’s good!
- Sense of humor. I like to laugh – especially at myself.
- Grace. I know I am not, nor will I ever be perfect, and while I expect hard work from myself and others, I do not expect perfection.

11. What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

The challenges to the church are the same at the congregational and synodical level, with the difference being of scale. One challenge is **diminishing resources**. I would suggest gathering people from all aspects of church life into prayerful discernment of what is most needed to be the synod, that is, to be interconnected communities of faith, and then to explore what restructuring is needed to accomplish that goal. Questions for discernment would include: How can we . . . harness technology for better efficiency and effectiveness; raise up the gifts of laypeople; be more attuned to the needs of our communities; be energized to address those needs; reimagine the role of the synod, the mission district, and the deans? A second challenge to our church is the issue of **polarization**. As individual followers of Christ, as congregations, and as a synod, we must actively listen to all voices (even those with whom we disagree) with the compassion of Christ, and then reclaim our common mission.

12. Describe your leadership style. (1,000 characters maximum)

In my leadership, I seek to inspire with a vision, to cheerlead a team in its efforts, and to coach the team toward its goals. I am highly motivated by innovation: by discovering and collaborating on new ways of doing old and cherished things. My core commitments are compassion, honesty, integrity, transparency, health, balance, and meeting people where they are.