



Alicia Anderson

What year were you ordained?

November 1992

Where have you served in the past?

Internship at Lutheran Student Center, University of Nebraska -Lincoln (1990-1991) | First Call to Lutheran/Episcopal Campus Ministry, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater (1992-1996)

Where are you currently serving?

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State, University Park, PA (1996-present)

Why are you a Christian?

The core teachings of Christianity that center on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth are an important part of why I am a Christian. Jesus' call to love our neighbors as we love ourselves while loving God above everything challenge me to prioritize others, to honor God who is the source of life and light, and to find ways to use my gifts and abilities to live out love, rather than turning in on myself.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope a congregation or other faith community is a place where people find welcome and a safe place to share their struggles and celebrate their joys with others. Grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus, shaped by the theology of Martin Luther, and gathered with others in compassion and humility, a faith community comes together for worship where people encounter God and discover God's presence and work in their lives. A faith community comes together for service to others living God's love and exercising compassion and care for others. A faith community comes together for learning where people can explore God's word, the diversity of faith expressions in their community and the world, and the wide variety of ways faith and life intersect in daily living.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1) Building connections that can enhance the lives of our congregations and the ministry we strive to offer. Within congregations, within communities, within conferences, within the synod, with ELCA Churchwide organization/structure

2) Empowering leaders (rostered and others) to support and collaborate with each other and the synod structure.

3) Empowering congregations (leaders and members) to use their abilities and resources to care for our neighbors, to defend the vulnerable, and to seek justice and peace in our lives, our communities, and across the world.



John Barichivich

Why are you a Christian?

Why I am a Christian. The easiest answer is that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. My faith in Jesus Christ has been more of a journey through life. My faith journey is based solely on God's love and grace revealed in the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

My hopes for any congregation is that they embrace the transforming love of God, and in doing so live out their baptismal promises. That the ministries of the congregation reach out into the surrounding community as well as participate in the ministries of the Synod and the wider church.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Primary areas of Focus for the Allegheny Synod:

The first area would be better communication between Synod and the Rostered Leaders, with that I would say we as a synod should work on getting to know each other and integrate this connectedness to the members of the congregation. We need to let go of the us and them mentality.

Secondly we should work on beefing up our Synod Youth Program which would in the long run help connect the congregations of this Synod.

Third area of focus is always on going focus of any Synod New Mission starts.



Vicki Beilfuss

Why are you a Christian?

My Christian faith and identity has been forming since was a child, raised in a family who actively participated in the life of the church. I truly believe in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, in the saving grace of Jesus crucified and risen. Because I have experienced God's comfort, strength, insight, grace and persistent presence in my life, I know I belong to him.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope a congregation will work together in worship and ministry with grace. To foster leadership and participation. To be invested in the surrounding communities and willing to learn what their communities need, and then share themselves in a way that brings life. To be open to partnerships.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

One focus is building/rebuilding community within the Synod itself—both clergy and laity.
Another focus is encouraging, preparing and supporting laity for leadership in worship and congregational leadership.
Another focus is enabling our congregations to move beyond surviving to thriving.



David Bowman

Why are you a Christian?

I'm first became a Christian because I was born into the faith. I've remained a Christian because my faith edifies and buoys me through all the rises and falls of life. Christ's presence and grace make a difference in my daily living and I want to continue in that relationship.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope for a congregation to live out its calling to be the Body of Christ. I hope a congregation will help make God's grace tangible to each other, its community, and the world. I hope that a congregation will support one another in love and fellowship, continuously grow in wisdom and maturity in faith, invite and welcome others into its body, and worship and serve God through word and deed.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

- 1) Equipping congregations for better evangelism practices
- 2) Provide resources for better leadership (lay and rostered) in our congregations
- 3) Foster better communication amongst the congregations
- 4) Foster better communication amongst the Rostered Leaders



Brandon Cian

Why are you a Christian?

Probably because my parents raised me that way but ever since as an adult I've always felt Jesus calling me to this faith. Church has always been a place I felt peace even when church wasn't itself peaceful. To give a theological answer would be what Jesus has done for me on the cross and resurrection but even more it's that Jesus never seems to give up on me.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

My help from a congregation is that they will have compassion and love. They will see the pastor as a human being as somebody who has a family who has needs. Somebody who gets tired, who is cranky and also needs love. Congregation that can remind the pastor I think you need to go rest. Congregation that can see beyond its walls. They can truly listen to one another, even in disagreement. A congregation that can truly be a city on the Hill.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Help finding a bishop that we truly need and want that can lead us and be a pastor to the pas, figuring out what to do with congregations that cannot afford a Pastor, had a truly care for the pastors.



Carol Custead

Why are you a Christian?

My parents were a great faith inspiration for me as I was growing up. We attended Sunday School and worship services every Sunday and I was involved in children's and youth activities. Also, the pastors were inspiring and encouraging. I later attended a Lutheran College (Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota) and majored in religion which helped me to grow in faith. During the summers while I was in college I worked as a camp counselor at two Lutheran Church Camps in Minnesota. The pastors who served as chaplains were also an inspiration, and they encouraged me to go to seminary and become a pastor once the LCA began ordaining women

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I would hope that the members are friendly to each other and do not engage in conflict with each other or the pastor. I hope for strong faith-forming programs for children and youth. I hope that they stay focused on their central mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ to each other and all the world in all that they do.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. Helping vacant congregations find a pastor to call and serve them.
2. Encouraging declining small congregations to close and merge with another nearby congregation and strengthening their ministry.
3. Discerning the future of this synod the possibility of merging with another synod in our region.



Scott Custead

Why are you a Christian?

First, is the accident of birth. I was born into a church going family. Although my parents were not overt in their outward devotions and expressions of faith, they were in church every Sunday and Holy Day. They attended adult Sunday School and other classes. They were diligent in seeing that I was in the children's choirs, Sunday School, Confirmation Classes, Vacation Bible School, and Luther League. This upbringing meant that the passive path was one of faith participation. I would have had to make a concrete decision to not be a Christian.

Second, is having a concrete faith experience. In places with a explicit decision theology it could be said that I had an adolescent "born again" experience. This experience came through my participation in a charismatic "Jesus People" commune that met on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood when I was in high school. Even at the time I questioned much of the theology espoused in the place, and I today would have no problem labeling it as cult. However, the emotional experience of God's presence that I experienced was real and it did indeed make my faith life more real and personal. I certainly would not propose that such an experience is essential to a life of Christian faith, but I would also firmly hold that it was a positive part of my Christian faith journey.

Third, is an intellectual assent to a Christian understanding of life, society, and the universe. Obviously, this space does not allow one to expound deeply on any systematic understanding of Christianity, but an intellectual commitment to Christianity has been an essential part of my faith life. I was blessed to go a large public University in Los Angeles that had a small Religious Studies department. I majored in that field, and in those classes I was exposed to modern Biblical studies, the psychology and philosophy of religion, and the intellectual expressions of faith. I became fluent in Classical Greek and Latin. I was particularly inspired by a semester spent studying Paul Tillich's Systematic Theology.

Why are you a Christian?
Continued

Fourth, is life experience. In my parish ministry I have done more than 600 funerals. I have also spent time with countless people suffering through illness, addiction, divorce, depression, personal struggles, and more. As I have aged I have also had my share of such struggles. Life only makes sense to me if we can see ourselves as looking through "the glass darkly" into the infinity of the God who is in, above, and beyond the created order. The faith gives us individually and collectively, as the Church, the foundation we need to meet the challenges of life and to be a positive force in the lives of others, our communities, and society as a whole. I am a Christian because I have experienced the God who gives our existence meaning and hope.

**What do you hope for
from a congregation?**

1. A commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ that overrides the commitment to the status quo. The majority of people who participate in the life of a congregation like the congregation and find meaning in its activities. If they did not, they would not be a part of the congregation. This is obviously a good thing. However, it does mean that the active members of a congregation have a natural tendency to be invested in "things as they are". I would hope, however, for a commitment to ministry that allows a congregation to look beyond themselves in order to expand and adapt ministry.
2. An open and trusting environment that encourages competent positive individuals to volunteer to serve in leadership positions within the congregation.
3. A sense of joy in the Lord. It is easy to fall into a "ministry as drudgery" mindset. I would hope for a sense that it is a privilege to be the Lord's servants. A congregation is blessed when its members can find joy in each other and in the ministry that God has called them to do together.

**What should our three (3)
primary areas of focus be
for the Allegheny Synod in
the next five (5) years?**

1. Building a sense of Christian fellowship among the rostered and lay leaders of the synod. This sense of fellowship is essential for facilitating our common ministries and discerning where the Lord is leading us.
2. Resizing our congregational and synod structures to serve current realities. Much of our ministry is based in structures that developed to serve the realities of twenty five years ago. An illustration of this is watching congregations with twenty in worship struggling to find twelve people to serve on the congregational council.
3. Finding ways to provide quality preaching and sacramental administration in each place our people gather. This includes such things as raising up candidates for ordination, answering hard questions about lay leadership at sacramental services, training lay leaders, and continuing education for rostered leaders. We probably could gain much insight by examining the best practices of other synods, ecumenical partners, and even other Christians with whom we often have too little contact.



Pernelle DeVore

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because 72 years ago I was baptized into the Christian faith. My father died at the age of 42 when I was 13. Because of this reality I now needed to make sense of, my faith journey was strengthened during my three years of catechism. When I was confirmed, I found that service to be very meaningful as I made promises to God. As the years have passed, I have seen the hand of God at work in my life. God's blessings, love, and mercy have overflowed in my life and in response to those gifts I have been encouraged to share them with others.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

As a Lutheran Christian, it is vital for me to hear law/gospel proclaimed in sermons. It is important that the congregation keeps its focus on Jesus and seeks to serve others in his name in the congregation, community, and world. I hope that the congregation is seen as a community whose members love one another and work together as the body of Christ.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Communication among synod, congregations, and leaders is vital since we are a small synod. With fewer children and youth in our congregations, I would like to see more synod events/programs where they have an opportunity to learn and grow in Christ together. I was a member of the transition team that brought the ELCA Allegheny Synod into being from the LCA Central Penn Synod. Now with the shortage of pastors and fewer congregations, is it time to consider merging with another synod for sharing resources and finances?



Laurretta Dietrich

What year were you ordained?	September 28, 1996
Where have you served in the past?	Assorted calls in the Upstate NY Synod (1996 - 2018), Metropolitan NY Synod (2018 - 2021), Allegheny Synod (2021 - present).
Where are you currently serving?	Spring Mills Lutheran Parish, Spring Mills, PA; Allegheny Synod of the ELCA, Nittany Conference
Why are you a Christian?	Because Jesus loves me and is my Lord.
What do you hope for from a congregation?	Faith in Jesus Christ active in word, worship, prayer, learning, forgiveness, service, and community.
What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?	1) How to BE FAITHFUL DISICPLES AND CHURCH in these changing times. 2) How to adapt as church in inviting and welcoming one another in these changing times. 3) How to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the worship of God in these changing times, having some history and tradition from the past moving forward with us as a Christian, LUTHERAN church, yet finding how to relate the gospel of Jesus Christ to/with others in a largely non-interested world in organized, community religion and faith.



Katherine Douglass

What year were you ordained?

1995

Where have you served in the past?

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Johnstown PA
Paroisse du Mont-Vaudois, Héricourt, France
Christ Lutheran Church, Dubois PA

Where are you currently serving?

Retired

Why are you a Christian?

Because Christ the Good Shepherd has sought me out and brought me into his fold.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

Honesty, trust, transparency and community.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Outreach, global mission and service to community



Mark Fischer

Why are you a Christian?

Quick answer: It's the way I was raised. Longer answer: As someone in their mid 60's, I have experienced joy, sadness, grief, happiness, highs, lows, remorse, and regret. I am Peter who confesses, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Where shall I turn? Where else can I turn? You have the words of eternal life."

What do you hope for from a congregation?

Forgiveness: I'm not perfect. I will say words that will upset and offend someone. That they will forgive me as I forgive them. Love: That they will feed me as much as I hope I feed them. Respect: That as I respect certain boundaries they have, they will respect certain boundaries that I have.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

>Is the Allegheny Synod still going to be viable in five years? With the clergy shortage, declining attendance at congregations, and decreasing benevolence contributions, would it be more prudent to consider splitting up the synod with our neighboring synods. The Allegheny Synod was once part of the Central Pennsylvania Synod until the formation of the ELCA. Would it be better if the Allegheny Synod was shared with neighboring synods.? We are already in a cooperating cohort with Upper Susquehanna Synod and Northwest Synod for GTIITM. >Find a way to remove the distrust between congregations and the Allegheny Synod.

>Empower the conference deans in their service.



Barry Folmar

What year were you ordained?

1977

Where have you served in the past?

Evangelical Lutheran Church, Newry, PA. St Peter Lutheran Church, Highspire, PA. St John Lutheran Church, Bellefonte, PA

Where are you currently serving?

First Lutheran Church, Altoona, PA

Why are you a Christian?

Because the Holy Spirit moved my parents to desire Baptism for me. So that is Grace moving. I have professed my faith in Jesus Christ, continue to reject sin and receive forgiveness. Indeed I do confess that the Holy Scripture are the Word of God and are the norm and rule of faith and life. As an Ordained Pastor, I do accept, teach and confess the Apostles, the Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds. I also acknowledge the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses and faithful expositions of the Holy Scriptures. I have preached and taught in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. I know the Holy Spirit was poured out on me through Prayer, Laying on of Hands and filled me with gifts of grace for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. It was God our Father who raised our Lord Jesus, who by the blood of the eternal covenant has equipped me with everything needed for the work of ministry. Basis of writing is from Occasional Services, 1982

What do you hope for from a congregation?

Faithfulness to Jesus mission. Willingness to share all gifts generously. Maintain peace.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. The Bishop, Rostered Leaders and all lay persons have a unifying purpose of serving Jesus in word and deed. For instance, First Lutheran Church has four main strengths:
 - Worship
 - Outreach in the Altoona area, with outstanding music programs which are community based.
 - We have an exceptional School, Tender Love for Children, which has been for 35 years a true mission of care and connection, beyond our membership.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?
continued

2. Local emphasis on needs in the community.
3. We have committed Christian members who encourage one another to love and to imagine and embody good works, and also, especially to encourage on being habitually in worship.



Glenn Foster

What year were you ordained?

1993

Where have you served in the past?

St. Mark, Snyderstown

Where are you currently serving?

Mt. Carmel, Meyersdale; Mt. Tabor, Garrett;
St. John, Addison; St. Paul, Fort Hill

Why are you a Christian?

I was baptized and raised in the church.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

To live in community and fellowship, worshiping together and sharing the love of Christ with our neighbors.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

- 1) To provide support for the Rostered Leaders and Congregations of the Synod.
- 2) to connect with the larger church ecumenically in our region, to see where we might serve together.
- 3) to connect congregations together.



Nancy Gable

What year were you ordained?

1979 (predecessor to ELCA rostering)

Where have you served in the past?

Trinity Lutheran, Waukegan, IL.
Grace Lutheran, State College, PA.
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, PA.
ELCA, Chicago, IL (in Region 8).
Garden of Grace Community of Churches, Adams County, PA.
United Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, PA.

Where are you currently serving?

United Lutheran Seminary

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian not only because I believe Jesus is the Son of God, but also because I firmly believe in the Theology of the Cross.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope for a congregation to be a mission site in the community and in the world. The congregation provides robust worship, which for me means knowledge of many liturgies and proclamation that challenges folks to serve others as Jesus served and to strive for justice and peace in all of the world.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. Respond to the forward looking synod staff, while honoring those who came before us.
2. Sound fiscal footing.
3. Creative visioning for how the ELCA on the territory should be a mission location.



Tyler Graham

Why are you a Christian?

Believing in the One, Holy, Triune God and the Gospel whereby I am forgiven, renewed, and freed from Sin to love and serve Him and my neighbor. This freedom provides for a life of sacrifice and is only feasible by the grace and mercy gifted by God through His Son, Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit into whom I have been baptized and am nourished and nurtured through the Holy Eucharist.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

Mutual support and service to Christ that is grounded in the spiritual practices of prayer, worship, communion, fellowship, and witness. Such life together should reflect Lutheran theology and align with the teachings of the Christian Church that we serve one another and our neighbors with the same dignity, grace, and mercy revealed to us in the life and teachings of Christ Jesus.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

- 1) Partnership in the Gospel - that we are not in competition with each other, but members of the same body. That each member / church is valued and gifted and invited to share in the one baptismal vocation of all the baptized.
- 2) Christian Education / Formation - to strengthen our understanding of Lutheran theology, our relationship with God and one another, and enrich our discipleship.
- 3) Viability / Sustainability - to enter into the tough work of discernment with congregations to listen for God's voice and will with recognition of realities and the desire to be faithful in our stewardship and discipleship.



Ralph Hamer

Why are you a Christian?

Why am I a Christian? Because my faith that brings me hope for a world that swims in despair, belief that we are more than mere wonderful accidents of nature, and that there one who helps make sense of the miraculous events that surround us. We pray and one is healed. We grieve loss but find a way to continue. We make grievous errors in judgement and we are able to rebuild and be freed from what held us captive. I believe because it is not only how I define myself but the world around me. It is what give me strength to face each day.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

A sense of common support in the faith journey and a willingness to reach out in positive ways to the local community and through international partners. I expect the view to be held that all people are made in the image of God and are blessed by God with gifts. Also, that it is recognized that each of us is on a faith journey that is as unique as our individual lives so no two faith journeys will be exactly the same not will we travel at the same speed. For a congregation to recognize that we gather in mutual support of each other and in worship of the God we profess.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Development of leadership, both ordained and laity, and equipping them to face the ever changing challenges of our world. Congregational stability through mutual support and trust. A deeper sense of mission, both individually and corporately.



Regina Holliday

Why are you a Christian?

When I was a child and I was scared and in pain, I prayed to God each night and he answered me in the love Jesus Christ. I was baptized as a baby in the LCMS and as an adult became an ELCA member because I felt strongly that we should love and welcome all to Christ's table.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope that a congregation is willing to grow and change. That working together we can abide with God building a tent that covers the learning disabled child, the rebellious teenager, the stressed-out parent, the lonely senior and the outsiders among us.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. Evangelism A. Evening Supper Church Services where church members and the wider community sit and eat together and become friends while learning about the words of Jesus. A lot of people cannot come to church on Sunday morning but they can come on a week night. B. Bible Study/Laundry ministry: There are lot of folks that cannot afford to wash their laundry, if a church has municipal water this would be an amazing ministry. C. Look into concepts like Upward Sports. There was a time every church had a softball team or a duckpin bowling league.
2. Youth Ministry. A. Create simple free educational templates for Summer VBS. Offer small grants to help cover the cost of VBS even \$100.00 would be a great help. B. Encourage the growth of kid's clubs, help provide resources for this clubs with coloring pages or activities.
3. Supply Pastors, Create a group of circuit rider supply pastors paid for by synod funds, that can serve periodically at under-served churches and get them up to date on all the new wonderful programs and resources available from the synod.



Juliana Holm

Why are you a Christian?

Because the model and witness of the life of Jesus is something I want to model my life after. Because I acknowledge Jesus as my Christ, my messiah, my salvation. Because in Jesus I am more than just myself - I am part of the Body of Christ in the World.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

That they strive to ever be closer to God. That they can continue a sacramental life in community. That they learn to reach outside themselves to care for the least of these in the world around them. That they would speak out against injustice.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Support of congregational members and congregations, through support of churches in the denomination with coordination and resources. Resisting injustice in our world, and providing options for our congregations to do so as well (thank you LAMPAA!). Providing support to the least of these in our country and world.



Nancy Hoover

Why are you a Christian?

I cannot remember a time when I did not know and love Jesus. From saying prayers with my family every night, to sitting on my grandmother's lap hearing Bible stories, to attending the nursery class and hearing lessons from the brightly colored Bible story pamphlets, to attending Sunday School every week, worship each Sunday morning and Wednesdays in Lent, Luther League on Sunday evenings, and Vacation Bible School every summer, my childhood was graced with people who knew and shared with me the love of God, love of the church, and love for other people. I still give thanks to God for this blessing. Through this community of faith—family, pastors, teachers, and other church workers—I learned not only a basic theology of the Triune God but also how to live out my faith not only by sharing my knowledge of God but also by living my life in the way God would have me live, with Jesus as an example. Of course, I was not always successful! Over the years I have come to see God's mission in the world as drawing all people to know God's love and peace and joy, and empowering them to use their "time, talent and treasure" to teach others about Jesus who continues to save us, and the Holy Spirit who continues to sustain us and all of creation. God's mission is an ongoing one, a God who is with us always, and who leads and guides us, and has gifted us individually so that we may point others to the God of us all. God's love for us manifests itself in ways that empower us in body, mind, and spirit (our human trinity, as it were) to carry out God's overall will that all people would come to God and that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I would hope that a congregation where I served would want to be fully involved in and committed to our joint ministry and to work together with me to spread the Gospel within the congregation, the community, and the world. I would hope that I could gain their trust through my own faithfulness to my calling and my willingness to serve them in good times and difficult times, with the help of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I would hope that the congregation would pray for me, be honest with me, and trust that I would do my best to help them in their relationship with God. If they had any disagreements with me, I would hope that they tell me so that we could work it out with God's help. I have been leading this congregation for 15 years now, and I give thanks that there have been no problems between the congregation and me, and I feel that I have been very blessed to be able to serve them and that they are supportive of this ministry that we share. I could not ask for any better congregation. We are small, but we have done good things together in God's name.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

First: Obviously, the Allegheny Synod needs to elect a bishop who can serve them well and more congregational leaders, whether ordained pastors or lay leaders or whatever can work for us, so that our congregations have a reliable source of "leadership" into the future. For various reasons some congregations seem to have lost their focus on serving God by serving others and have become more obsessed with their buildings, doing things the same old way, and are not interested in working to spread the Gospel.

Second: Unfortunately, we need to have more leaders who are concerned with ministry rather than their own needs. I imagine this is the case in many congregations and denominations, not just in this synod. When I gather with other pastors, there is certainly more talk about salaries, benefits, mileage, and other forms of compensations than there is about ministry, either within their own congregations or in wanting to work with other congregations to spread the Gospel by what they say and do as a synod. I know this is a difficult one!

Third: More synod-wide events, including educational events for clergy, lay leaders, and lay people would help us to get to know each other better, learn more about living the Christian life, asking questions about theology, and just sharing experiences. From what I remember, "synod" means "walking together," but the Allegheny Synod does not seem to do that!



Becky Horn

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because I believe Jesus is the Son of God who died and was resurrected to redeem the whole world and because I trust in Jesus' teaching that we are to love one another as God has and does love us.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope that a congregation would be a place where we are able to promote and enact the love of God for all people regardless of any designations we or others put upon people. I hope for a place where ALL are truly welcome and seen as beloved and loved children of God.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

First, we should focus on what it means to love all people and turn this into a focus of any and all ministries we support. Second, we should focus on reducing the number of buildings used for congregations, seeking to better utilize the resources of each congregation for the common good and care of neighbor. Third, we need to focus on what it means to live faithfully as Christians in our daily lives, including but not limited to, how we interact in society and our civil engagement.



Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte

Why are you a Christian?

My faith has been an important part of my life ever since I was a little girl and I've always considered myself a Christian. As I grew older and my faith matured, I began to have a personal relationship with Jesus and learned to rely upon him during both the good and the challenging times in my life. After becoming Lutheran more than 25 years ago and discovering the grace and love that God has for each of us, the life of Jesus and the example he set for us to live became so compelling to me that I wanted to share his good news of love for all people. My time in seminary further strengthened my faith as a follower of Christ as I began to have a greater understanding of the Jesus in the gospels and how I could live as he commanded and point others to follow Jesus.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

One of my favorite verses is Hebrews 10:24-25, "...let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together...but encouraging one another." This is my hope for a congregation – that we in the Allegheny Synod would continually encourage one another in love, welcoming all who enter with the love of Christ and offering radical hospitality and acceptance of ALL people. Because of the love, grace, and forgiveness that God shows us, we would be empowered to share that love to our neighbors in need by helping those in our communities and throughout our nation and the world through our good deeds.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

(1) Increase visibility through outreach and involvement in our communities such as food giveaways, soup kitchens, and celebration gatherings that offer more visibility for the Allegheny Synod and the ELCA, enhanced through grant funding and partnerships. Many of our congregations are small but if we work together and collaborate regionally instead of staying in our silos, we can do great things that help point others to Christ. This increased visibility would help individuals and congregations see the work and the value of the synod. This will also help provide much-needed services to our neighbors in need, especially in the midst of government cuts for many of these programs.

(2) Develop more partnerships and collaborations. Most congregations have been affected by reduced attendance and giving since the pandemic and smaller churches struggle to stay open. By exploring multi-point parish arrangements with our full communion partners and tapping into lay leader resources with our partners, we can help lessen some of the financial burden our congregations are facing as well as the increased challenge of filling empty pulpits. This may also help in retaining congregations that have considered joining the NALC.

(3) Actively recruit pastors and deacons to the Allegheny Synod, as well as increase the pool of lay worship leaders to help fill the current vacancies in our synod.



John Kratz

Why are you a Christian?

In addition to affirming the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds, I have experienced the forgiving love of God through His Son Jesus Christ. God's forgiveness and call upon my life has been affirmed in a myriad of ways, with the most compelling being God's grace lived out in my life and in the life of every congregation I have worshiped with and served.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope that all of our congregations will faithfully proclaim in word and deed that Jesus Christ is Savior AND Lord. May we all live under the grace of God for one another and the call of God in service to the Holy Kingdom.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Cooperation is the new economy so we should work closer to eliminate our silos of ministry.
Two, we should focus on training the next generation in witness and proclamation.
Third, we should focus on making Disciples for Jesus Christ so that our communities are transformed by God's grace and call.



Larry Louder

What year were you ordained?	1973
Where have you served in the past?	Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lancaster Pa, St. Luke Lutheran Church, Silver Spring, MD, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Duncansville, PA, Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries, Hollidaysburg, PA, Grace Lutheran Church, State College, Pa
Where are you currently serving?	Retired
Why are you a Christian?	x
What do you hope for from a congregation?	x
What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?	x



Traci Marriott

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because I find purpose and hope in the life and teaching of Jesus, and I want to be part of a community that, by living into Jesus' way of compassionate service, is helping to heal this broken world.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope any congregation, having encountered God's love in word and sacrament, will value each other as co-members of the body of Christ and work together for the sake of their neighbors and the world.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Three primary areas of focus for the Allegheny Synod in the next five years should be:
helping individual congregations assess their potential and limitations for ministry in their *current* context;
connecting clergy and lay members across congregations for fellowship, mutual support, and cooperative ministry;
educating rostered leaders and lay members for faithful witness to God's love, especially in light of rising hostility toward mainline progressive Christianity



Tiffany Marvich

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because I have experienced the saving love and grace of Christ, revealed through His life, death, and resurrection. This gift of faith has transformed my life, as well as the lives of others, and continues to bring positive change to the world.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope congregations cultivate a deep love for God, reflected in their worship, and a genuine love for others. I hope they can clearly express the relevance of Scripture in daily life. I also hope that individuals within the congregation faithfully use their God-given gifts, enabling the body of Christ to function according to God's will.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

To encourage pastoral leadership to demonstrate grace toward one another and those in the call of synodical leadership. The possibility of more collaborative ministries to occur among congregations. The possibility of exploring new ministry models for congregations to receive leadership support from laity and clergy.



Ronald Miller

Why are you a Christian?

Because Jesus Christ claimed me as I am and is at work within me by the power of the Holy Spirit. See John 15:16. My faith informs my daily life and my relationships. I grew up in a Christian home and my congregational life was very satisfying and fulfilling. Once I went to seminary I understand why I am a Lutheran Christian.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

To help people live their faith by seeking to equip people for the work of ministry, Mt. 28:16-20, Eph. 4:11-13. I also hope the lay leaders will step up according to Ex. 18:13-27; Acts 6:1-7. For disciples to see themselves as servants to the world thereby living their lives active in faith.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Recruit leaders for rostered status. Continue to build relationships among the rostered leaders. Celebration ministry accomplishments within congregations that make up the synod. Assist pastors to address political matters in ways appropriate to our faith tradition.



Jaime Olson

What year were you ordained?

2000

Where have you served in the past?

First Ev. Lutheran. Altoona; Ev. Lutheran, Duncansville

Where are you currently serving?

First/Faith Cooperative

Why are you a Christian?

Jesus loves me.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

That our relationship to God through Christ Jesus bares witness to the world a love beyond all measure.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Discern the synod's feasibility over time. Help congregations put the Good News in the understanding of Gospel. Invest time in congregations focused on mission.



Elisa Osman

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because Jesus loved me enough to die (and rise again) for me. However, I knew about that love because of a faithful community of believers (my family as well as others - people in my home congregation, friends, and others along the way) who took the time and energy to teach, nurture, and encourage that faith. As a result (and in response) to the love and faith that has been shared with me, (and through the gift of the Holy Spirit), I feel moved and called to share that love with others, so that their relationship with the God of life might be nurtured and grow.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I would hope that a congregation could be a community that lives out the gospel: offering a community of belonging, care, and hope; a place where worship is meaningful and encourages/supports connecting with the living God, and a place where working for justice and living out compassion is important.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. Tools for how to connect with people who see faith/church/God as irrelevant to their busy daily lives;
2. Exploring different ways to "be" church;
3. Continue to support congregations and their leaders in their unique ministry contexts.



William Osman

Why are you a Christian?

Because the Holy Spirit has called me to a life of faith, service, and trust in Jesus Christ. And because my mother was diligent about encouraging me to attend Sunday school and worship. In addition, church was one of the best places where I formed friendships, learned the scriptures, and found a place of belonging.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

That there would be an atmosphere of fellowship, praise, and togetherness. I hope that my current congregation would live into its mission of "being the light and blessing of Christ" so that we could provide Bellefonte and our neighbors with love and hope.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Fellowship - rebuilding trust among the rostered leaders and providing opportunities to meet together for learning, relaxing, and being together. 2) Leadership in a Challenging Time - that we could be guided in how to be a non-anxious presence in our congregations and provide them with tools to cope with the craziness around us. Finally, that we start to see Faith Formation as Collaboration - to think about and learn how to work together with fellow congregations (be they in our synod or another denomination)



David Pencek

Why are you a Christian?

Holy Spirit has led me to a faith in Jesus Christ as our savior, and it is through Jesus's death and resurrection we receive God's mercy and have life eternal with God. I can do nothing to receive this gift. It is only through God's grace.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

That the congregation is active in worship — giving thanks and praising God — and in being the body of Christ in the world. I hope a congregation would be open to new ideas, but also not to just ignore tradition and voices of the past. I hope the congregation looks for opportunities to share the faith with the community around them.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Meeting people where they are. Having Jesus be the center of everything it does. Improving relationships across the synod. Recognizing that one size doesn't fit all — what may work and be good for a church in a city or more densely populated area may not work in rural areas.



Nathan Pile

What year were you ordained? 2007

Where have you served in the past? Spring Mills Lutheran Parish

Where are you currently serving? Sequanota Lutheran Conference Center & Camp

Why are you a Christian? I am a Christian because my family taught me the faith and provided opportunities that guided me in seeing God in the world. Their love and support combined with my life experiences with God's people continue to nurture me as a Christian.

What do you hope for from a congregation? I hope for a community of believers, who seek: radical welcome for everyone; live, learn, and worship together; and make a difference in the world beyond their own lives.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years? Thinking about this question makes me sad. But I don't see the church of my youth in our future. This means seeking new ways to be communities of faith in God's ways. This process will not be easy, but it does provide pathways of hope as God's people in the world. Keeping Christ and community at our center will guide us through these areas of focus.

1) The Allegheny Synod must strategically plan and prepare for the difficult season the Church is experiencing today. This means mourning what the

**What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?
*continued***

Church has been and letting those patterns end. We all have "stuff" in our homes that we just don't use or need anymore. Typically we have a yard sale and reduce the clutter of our lives. The congregations and people need to decide what are the most important parts of the communities of faith that needs to move forward. This work will need Synod leadership to assist in these difficult conversations and decisions.

2) The communities of faith will need to support new leadership patterns. There is a rostered leader shortage across the ELCA and all Mainline Protestant denominations. The old pattern of hire a pastor to lead worship and manage the day to day work of the church is no longer sustainable. New patterns will need to be developed and Synod staff will need to advocate for these changes with the national church. This is completely doable, but will take time and energy to accomplish change in a large institution.

3) The people of God must continue to find ways to nurture our faith daily. Whether they are local Bible studies or new digital tools. Finding time together in our ever busy culture must become a priority. Faith has always been passed on in community. We need to find time to be together in fellowship, worship and service.



Claudia Plows

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because I have experienced God's love in ways that have shaped my life. Through struggles and joys, I have seen how Christ's presence brings hope, love, and peace in my life. He has given me so many blessings through my trials and struggles.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I would like to see growth within the congregation in Worship and Spiritual, increase community outreach within the area, inviting others to worship, and a more deeper personal commitment to the congregations faith through increased fellowship

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Empowering struggling congregations within the rural areas, strengthen rural and small church ministry, and have a deeper personal relationship between the Synod leaders and staff with the congregations.



Kathy Popp

Why are you a Christian?

I became a Christian because my parents were Christian. It began with my baptism at 3 weeks old in my mother's Russian Orthodox church in East Conemaugh. I then chose the Lutheran denomination when I married my husband as he was a Lutheran. I believe that God leads my life and hears my prayers and my praise. As Luther stated, "Here I stand. I can do no other."

What do you hope for from a congregation?

My hope in my congregation is that we are truly Brothers and Sister in Jesus Christ. My hope is that the congregants feel that we are a family as much as I do. I hope that we support one another in celebration and in need. And my hope is that we are completely inclusive to all in our community.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. Strategic, on-going, organized, and systematic TRAINING/INSTRUCTION for lay people who wish to become Authorized Lay Worship leaders. I believe with the current grant that this will happen.
2. That COMMUNICATIONS among the Synod, the clergy and other church leaders improves.
3. That we are led by God to CHOOSE A BISHOP who is organized, systematic, gives attention to detail, and is Holy Spirit filled is identified and, hopefully, elected.



Scott Schul

Why are you a Christian?

By reason and by faith I have concluded that the claim that Jesus is the Son of God who sacrificed his life to redeem me from sin and death is true. I therefore joyfully submit myself to him in trust and love, and seek to serve him by conforming my will to his. When I fail (as I often do) I cling to him for forgiveness and the hope of personal conversion and transformation.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

Christ's foundational call for all of us, whether individual or collectively, is to love God and love our neighbor. To that end, I hope for a congregation that embraces regular worship, prayer, and scripture study, not only as an obligation but as a blessed opportunity to grow in love for God and to honor God. Likewise, I hope for a congregation that will foster love for one another by enduring together and not fracturing over the normal abrasions that occur in human community. Finally, I hope for a congregation that looks beyond itself, to the good of those we do not know and who are not like us. All are our neighbors, without exception.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Fostering of trust between rostered leaders; calling out and eliminating professional and petty jealousies and clericalism; and skills training in preaching, worship, and personal devotional practices.



Kevin Shock

What year were you ordained?

2006

Where have you served in the past?

St. Mark Pleasant Gap 2006-2022

Where are you currently serving?

Allegheny Synod Office of the Bishop

Why are you a Christian?

The Spirit drove my parents to take me to the waters of Baptism where I received the gift of living faith in Jesus, but as an adult the Spirit has also shown me that the Way of Christ is the most compelling way to live with God, creation, and my kindred in the human family. Only in Christ can we find unity, peace, restoration, and hope.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I want to be part of a congregation where all people are engaged in ministry, where lay leaders and the pastor work alongside one another, and where a spirit of joy and reckless welcome is evident.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. Leading individuals and congregations in discovering their purpose in ministry, so that they are empowered to share Good News with anyone whom they encounter.
2. Developing area cooperative ministries with all of our congregations.
3. Raise up a greater number of pastors, deacons, and lay worship leaders from among our own people.



Josh Spangler

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because I am created and loved by a creative, loving, and grace filled God whose son, Jesus Christ, saved us by showing us God's true heart and how to be God's heart, hands, and feet in this world.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

My hope would be for a congregation to have faith not certainty. The beauty of faith is that it is a mystery and a mystery is something that is endlessly solved. I hope a congregation will join in faith as we discover more and more about this mystery and how we play a role in our faith, in our communities, and in our world.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. To keep exploring new ways to be the church.
2. Support churches and leaders as they experiment new ways to bring the gospel to their communities
3. Continue to develop deeper and closer relationships with ecumenical partners



Allen Stump

What year were you ordained?

2024

Where have you served in the past?

Lay worship leader for Synod and Associate Chaplain at Gettysburg Hospital. Served as Vicar at Christ Casebeer and Laurel Trinity Lutheran Churches. Served as Vacancy Vicar for St. Andrews Lutheran Church. Served as Chaplain at SCI Somerset. (Prison Ministry)

Where are you currently serving?

Serving as Pastor at Christ Casebeer and Laurel Trinity Lutheran Churches. Serving as Vacancy Pastor for St. Andrews Lutheran Church. Serving as Chaplain at SCI Somerset. (Prison Ministry)

Why are you a Christian?

Being a Christian and my love for Jesus likely stems from both my faith and theological understanding. Since loving Jesus is at the heart of Christianity, Jesus embodies grace, mercy, sacrifice, and redemption for me. Through Him, I experience God's boundless love and the promise of salvation. Lutheran theology emphasizes justification by faith, meaning that Jesus' love and sacrifice are freely given, not earned. His teachings inspire compassion, humility, and service, shaping how I guide the congregations I serve and live my life. Jesus' presence brings peace in my struggles, hope in uncertainty, and a profound sense of purpose.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

As a pastor, I hope at its best, a congregation would be a faithful, supportive, and engaged community that helps me grow alongside them. Be a community that was committed to deepening their faith, engaging in worship, and living out our Christian teachings. It would also be a congregation that was supportive and encouraging by uplifting one another, extending kindness within the church and beyond, and actively contributing to living out its mission through ministries, outreach, and fellowship. Finally, a congregation that embraces a shared purpose, that brings us together as we work towards a common vision of love, service, and discipleship.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

The three areas that this synod should be focusing on are equipping leaders, encouraging cooperation, and engaging in new mission. (I learned this from my time in the LSS Synod)

- Equipping leaders by providing ongoing theological and practical training that allows pastors and lay leaders to develop their skills and deepen their knowledge. Find ways to foster collaboration and encouragement, helping leaders navigate the challenges of ministry. Provide spiritual and emotional care that ensures leaders remain resilient and refreshed.
- Encouraging cooperation among congregations and pastors to foster unity and strengthen the overall mission of the church. Encourage more joint outreach efforts that allow congregations to pool resources for greater effectiveness, fostering collaboration rather than competition. Continue the dialogue that has been started to create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.
- Engaging new mission that empowers leaders and congregations to expand the church's presence, its impact, and ensures that the church remains vibrant and extends its reach beyond its current members and walls. Initiating new ministry approaches, including sharing sacred spaces to meet community needs, digital evangelism, and providing new ways to connect with people who may not feel comfortable in a traditional church settings.



Kathleen Stump

What year were you ordained?

2019

Where have you served in the past?

Internship Vicar - one year and resident vicar one year at Duncansville Evangelical Lutheran Church

Where are you currently serving?

Faith Lutheran Church - Pastor; St. Mark Lutheran-Vacancy Pastor/Supply; Gettysburg Hospital - Associate Chaplain

Why are you a Christian?

I am a Christian because faith has been woven into my life—shaped by experience, family, and the grace of God. My baptism welcomed me into something bigger than myself, a community built on love, trust, and hope. Holy Communion, Bible study, and worship are constant companions, reminding me of Christ's sacrifice, inviting me into deeper relationship. I believe in God's promises. I trust that God is guiding me, even when I don't see the whole path. I hope in God's redemption, knowing that His love never runs out. My faith is shaped not just by personal conviction but by the people who walk with me. It isn't just something to believe—it's something to live.

Together, we share in a faith that calls us to love, serve, and lift one another up, serving Christ and community in community with one another.

**What do you hope
for from a
congregation?**

I hope for a Christ-centered congregation that welcomes all, offers assistance, and walks together through all of life's seasons. A community that celebrates joys, deepens understanding through shared learning, and cares for the community both within and beyond its walls—always embodying presence, love, and service. Through heartfelt worship and prayerful support, may it glorify God and live out faith in action, ensuring that love and discipleship extend beyond words into daily life. I also hope the congregation would offer their prayers, support, and assistance for me—providing encouragement, wisdom, and spiritual nourishment as we journey together in faith.

**What should our three (3)
primary areas of focus
be for the Allegheny
Synod in the next five (5)
years?**

Communication That Works for Everyone - Ensure all congregations—whether large or small, rural or urban, with or without a pastor—stay connected and informed – be it Synod, churchwide or congregational announcements and updates.

Recognize that churches have different technological abilities, budgets, and accessibility, so support should be adaptable, using digital tools, print materials, and direct outreach.

Presence & Engagement Equipping Churches & Leaders for the Future - Provide guidance, training, and resources for congregations navigating leadership transitions, caring for aging members, and creating engaging ministry opportunities.



Paul Tomkiel

What year were you ordained?

2015

Where have you served in the past?

In First Call

Where are you currently serving?

St Paul Lutheran in Pine Grove Mills

Why are you a Christian?

I most clearly experience God through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ our Lord.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

To build up community, both inside and outside of the church building walls.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

- 1) Planting "New Wineskin" Congregations to proclaim the pure Gospel to our neighbors who have trouble attending our worship services due to our typical music styles.
- 2) Having congregation members make connections to people in their community who are not members nor worshipers.
- 3) Seek ways to love other members of the Synod



Evelyn Wald

Why are you a Christian?

I have been a Lutheran Christian my whole life. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. My faith matter to me and informs my thoughts and actions. I seek to spread love, justice, hope and peace to everyone. I am truly blessed.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope congregations will fulfill their mission as believers in Christ and serve their communities. I believe all congregations should be open and accepting of all of God's children. I believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ should be their guiding force. Congregations are called to live by Christ's command: Love your neighbor as yourself; Do unto others as you would have them do for you. I seek to be faithful to God's call in Micah: to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with the Lord.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

As the Allegheny Synod moves forward we need to focus on healing. Our synod needs to honestly address areas of conflict. We need to affirm the practices and mission of the ELCA. We need to be about racial healing and welcoming all peoples. We need to increase our diversity within our clergy. We need to root ourselves wholly in the Gospel - all pastors, council members and those serving within the synod in any capacity. We need more opportunities for clergy to get to know one another, work together and support each other. We need to support our Bishop and synod staff. We need to be active in our communities. We need to be the voices crying out in the wilderness of today's world. We need to embrace the uniqueness of smaller congregations in rural areas and capitalize on our strengths. Simply stated: we need to build and strengthen relationships: first and foremost with Christ, with one another (individuals and congregations) and with our communities and the nation as a whole. Faith active in love.



Laura Waltermire

Why are you a Christian?

To embody and share the same grace, love and mercy that Christ gave us. To support others in see their gifts and how they can uses those gifts with the gifts of others in their community to be the change in the world.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope that the congregation I am called to has a love of community and want to share God grace, love and mercy with them. That they willing to share their faith stories with others. The are honest and open with any called pastor.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

As a synod we need to work reconciliation so we can begin to heal the past wounds. Once that process begins then we can work relationship building so we as a synod are more collegial. We also need to work on communcation so we know what is happening with in the synod and each other



Rebecca West

Why are you a Christian?

I find meaning in the life and teachings of Jesus, of his suffering, death, and resurrection, seeing him as the ultimate expression of God's grace and redemption. I am also drawn to the teachings of Scripture, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the community of faith

What do you hope for from a congregation?

As a pastor, my hope for a congregation is that it embodies the love and grace of Christ—not just within the walls of the church but in the world; a community that is spiritually engaged, eager to grow in faith, and committed to worship, service, and fellowship; and open hearts and a willingness to embrace new ways of being church together.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

1. Robust communication plan;
2. Plan for using the gifts of the pastors;
3. Plan for how congregations can determine their future (i.e., documents related to forming a parish or joining with another congregation; options for congregations



Ted Williams

Why are you a Christian?

I didn't have a choice. In early adulthood, I turned away from God because the prevailing message was God hated me because I was gay. God kept showing up and revealing Godself to me in the most amazing ways that turned me back to God and my current path as ordained pastor.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I pray daily for a congregation that will invite all of God's children, especially those that have been marginalized. Help those that have felt the way I have felt, see that our God is radically welcoming of those society deems the least. Making space in our congregations for the most vulnerable.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

Radical Hospitality. Reaching out and welcoming those that have been hurt by the church in the past and continue to harm.

Prophetic witness to Jesus Christ in the world and standing against all who are anti-Christ, including our public leaders.

Supporting unconventional ministries that are not congregation centered.



David Wright

What year were you ordained?

1996

Where have you served in the past?

Christ - Providence Lutheran Parish, Bedford; Community of Lutheran Churches, Bedford County; Everett - Breezewood Lutheran Parish, Bedford County; St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Cumberland, MD

Where are you currently serving?

St. Clairsville Lutheran Parish (St. Peter's and Messiah Lutheran Churches)

Why are you a Christian?

I was raised in the Lutheran church, so I was taught the faith from birth. I believe that God has given each of us a unique set of gifts and talents. Our means of thanking God for those gifts is to use them in our daily life in order to share our faith with others. We use that sharing of our gifts to invite others into the Christian faith, as well as encourage others who are already Christian.

What do you hope for from a congregation?

I hope that members of every congregation will individually and corporately reach out to those around them in their daily lives to share Christ's love. I hope that all congregations are warm, inviting places where all feel welcomed and accepted.

What should our three (3) primary areas of focus be for the Allegheny Synod in the next five (5) years?

- In no particular order ...
- 1) Improve clear and timely communications from the Synod Office to Rostered leaders
 - 2) Continued outreach of Social Ministry to all areas of the Synod territory
 - 3) support of and cooperation with the Bishop