

Biographical Information Form

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM:

NOMINEE FOR BISHOP OF THE Allegheny Synod

1. Name: Rev. Ralph W. Hamer III
2. Current Position: Director of Pastoral Care and Congregational Relations
3. Congregation Membership: Trinity Lutheran Church, Altoona
4. Date and Year of Birth: 12/13/62
5. Date and Year of Ordination: 9/11/1988
6. Previous Positions: Pastor of St. James Lutheran Church, Altoona
Spiritual Care Coordinator with Aseracare Hospice
Chaplain at Mercy Hospital, Altoona Hospital and UPMC Hospital - Altoona
7. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):
Masters of Divinity for the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, 1988
Bachelors of Science in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh, 1984
8. List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.
Member of Synod Council
Member of the Discipline Committee
Served on the Synod Small Church and Membership Committee
Former Chair of the Synod Social Ministries Committee
Served as an internship supervisor and former instructor in Lay Worship classes

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

Former Lutheran Judicatory representative to the Ecumenical Conference of Altoona, Served on the Board of Family Services of Altoona, Served in various positions with the Altoona Area Co-Mission, Volunteer with Scouts, and a surrogate parent through Appalachia IU08 for student's IEPs.

10. What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

I believe I bring to the office of bishop the gift of listening. Not just hearing the words spoken but also what individuals and congregations hope to achieve and to be. I believe I bring an ability to think "outside the box". Working in parish, clinical, and long-term care provided opportunities to explore how the Gospel can be shared and ministry done in new ways. For congregations in changing communities, financial situations, and memberships, this can prove a vital asset. I believe I bring a sense of humor. In the midst of difficulties it can be good to step back, take a deep breath, have a laugh, and return with an open mind.

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)

Traveling through the synod I have heard what appears to be a crisis of identity. Congregational members talk of who they were as being more meaningful than who they are now. Who are we without a full-time pastor? Are we important as a small membership congregation or waiting to fade away? Continuing the work begun this year to lift up how communities are enriched by each congregation is important. Opportunities for mutual cooperation in ministry and leadership will need to be explored. Encouraging and equipping leadership, lay and ordained, is vital to responding to the contexts in which we now share the love of Christ.

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

I was raised and mentored in the school of servant leader. I was taught never to ask anyone to do what you would not be willing to do yourself. Because of this, I tend to be a part of the ministries to which I have been called. However, I have also learned when to let those who are gifted and better suited to a task take the lead. In these cases, I tend to be more of a support person through encouragement and working to assure that those in leadership have the tools to achieve their goals.