

## Biographical Information Form

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM:

#### NOMINEE FOR FOR BISHOP OF THE SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

**1. Name:** Julie DeWerth

**2. Current Position:** Pastor, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, King of Prussia

**3. Congregation Membership:** Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, King of Prussia

**4. Date and Year of Birth:** March 1, 1965

**5. Date and Year of Ordination:** August 11, 1991

**6. Previous Positions:**

Saint Petri-Hope Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, PA (Interim Pastor)

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church, Ardmore, PA (Associate Pastor)

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church, Lansdowne, PA (Pastor)

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church, Lionville, PA (Associate Pastor)

Camden Lutheran Parish, Camden, NJ (Pastoral Intern)

**7. Education and Earner Degrees (with Institutions and years, most recent first):**

Master's of Divinity - The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (1991)

Bachelor of Arts - Saint Olaf College (1987)

(Women's Studies, Religion, Sociology majors)

**8. List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.**

- Dean - I served as the Dean of the Lower Montgomery Conference for two consecutive terms and have recently been elected to another term.
- Delegate to the ELCA 2022 Churchwide Assembly.
- Bishop's Convocation (now Rostered Ministers Equipping Event) - I chaired this committee for many years and also served as a member on the team.
- Synod Council member - I recently completed my term.
- Bear Creek Camp - I have served as a chaplain at summer camp for many years and also served on the board and the Bear Creek Camp Pastors Advisory Council.

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

- Convenor of the Upper Merion Clergy Association.
- Serve as a chaplain for the Upper Merion Police Department.
- Spoke at the 2024 MLK Interfaith Service, sponsored by the office of Black Catholics.
- Preached at Villanova University Mass during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and sat on a panel for the same.
- Co-led a workshop at the Keystone Transgender Conference entitled, "Transitioning in Faith."

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

- I have the courage to take risks, am flexible and am not afraid to fail.
- While most of my ministry has been served in the suburbs, I was trained in the city (the Camden Lutheran Parish) and have served a congregation in Northeast Philadelphia. I have familiarity with different ministry settings.
- I have served as an interim, associate and solo pastor of congregations of various sizes and know the unique challenges and opportunities different size churches and positions present.
- Having served in this synod for my entire career (33 years), I know the synod and its churches well.
- I have supervised about a dozen seminarians (both as field students and interns) and work well with seminarians who are in the process of forming their pastoral identity.
- I am extremely organized and a good administrator.
- I am a good listener.
- I have a strong work ethic, in addition to not having a lot of competing demands on my time at this stage of my life.
- I feel comfortable working in the community with secular organizations and interfaith worshipping communities alike.
- I am able to empower lay people for the work of the kingdom.
- I have a lot of energy and know how to have fun!
- I have a love for the church and God's people.

**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)**

***Leadership***

*Challenge* - Clergy shortage.

*Opportunities* - Clergy will need to continue to encourage people to consider a call to rostered leadership. In the 13 years I have served Good Shepherd, we have had two of our members ordained. In addition, we will need to educate our gifted lay leadership to lead congregations when rostered leaders aren't available. Many of our congregations are in close proximity to one another. Some could share clergy. Also, we will continue to share rostered leaders with our full communion partners.

**Finances**

*Challenge* - Our synod, and many of our congregations, have declining financial resources and many of our buildings have deferred maintenance.

*Opportunities* - We will continue to educate our rostered leaders and parishioners about stewardship, but we will also continue to look to alternative revenue sources (renting space in our buildings, grant writing, etc). We will also have to find new ways to do ministry with fewer financial resources. We may have to sell some of our buildings. This must be done with patience and deep listening as we make hard decisions.

**Declining Worship Attendance**

*Challenge* - Declining Worship attendance in many churches.

*Opportunities* - The reality is that this is likely not to turn around. We will need to find new ways of engaging people in being disciples of Jesus; likely through service and fellowship. We will continue to improve our congregations' online worshiping experience as many people are choosing to worship virtually.

**Lack of Diversity -**

*Challenge* - Despite our best efforts, the ELCA continues to lack diversity.

*Opportunities* - As a white woman it would be wrong for me to think I knew how to attract BIPOC people to the Lutheran church. However, I am committed to listening to the voices of those who are far better equipped to answer this question. In addition, our congregations continue to struggle to attract a younger demographic. The surgeon general says that there is an epidemic of loneliness. We need to let the world know that we have an answer! We have Jesus and his people! And what we have, that almost no one else does, is intergenerational community which is an amazing gift.

**Lack of Vision -**

*Challenge* - Too often we only see scarcity.

*Opportunity* - Isaiah 43:19a, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" We will remain open to the Holy Spirit and the new thing God is doing.

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

My leadership style can best be described as collaborative. In my role as pastor I see myself as the coach of a team. It is the coach's job to cast a vision for the team. A good coach does not do this in isolation. Through prayer, holy conversation and brainstorming we work together to cast a vision and then work together to make the vision a reality.

One of my greatest gifts is identifying people with the spiritual gifts that are needed for particular tasks and then encouraging them to use them. I work hard to empower people to work together, believing that we can do much more together than apart. We strive to make the work that we do fun and rewarding.