



**Florida-Bahamas Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

## **2016 SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

### **NOMINATIONS BOOK**

#### **ELECTION RULES**

- Write-in ballots will not be allowed. Any ballot submitted with a name other than for a properly nominated person will be declared invalid.
- The Chair may allow for the report of the Elections Committee whenever the Committee is ready to report, and a ballot shall take precedence over any other order of business.
- Only Voting Members of the Assembly and congregational interns may be seated in the area designated for seating of voting members. (Congregational interns may not vote.)
- All voting members must be wearing their badges and be in their seats in the Voting Members section in order to vote. The doors to the meeting room will be closed during elections.
- Only information concerning nominees on official Biographical Data Forms developed and distributed by the Nominating Committee will be permitted at the Assembly. No use of special handouts or display area distribution concerning nominees will be permitted.

**ABSOLUTELY NO PROXY VOTING WILL BE ALLOWED.**

## POSITIONS OPEN FOR ELECTION

- Synod Council Representatives (3-year terms):
  - Southeast Mission District: Lay Female
  - Southeast Mission District: PCLE (Lay or Clergy)
  - Southwest Mission District: Clergy
  - North Mission District: Lay Male
  - North Mission District: PCLE (Lay or Clergy)
  - Youth 15-18 (Rising to 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade at time of election) Male or Female (2 year term)
- Synod Treasurer (4-year term): Lay or Clergy, Male or Female
- Consultation Committee (6-year term):
  - Four Positions 2 Clergy and 2 Lay
- Discipline Committee (6-year term):
  - Two Positions 2 Clergy

PCLE = Person of color or primary language other than English

## LIST OF NOMINEES 2016

| <u>Position</u>                                   | <u>Needed</u>   | <u>Nominees</u>    | <u>Nominees</u>      | <u>Nominees</u>     |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Synod Council Representative (3 Year Term)</b> |                 |                    |                      |                     |
| Southeast   | 1 Lay Female    | Ingrid Biesaart    |                      |                     |
| Southeast   | 1 PCLE          | Frank Burga        |                      |                     |
| Southwest   | 1 Clergy        | Rev. Paul Gibson   | Rev. Rob Rose        |                     |
|   |                 | Rev. Sean Bunger   | Rev. Ray Branstiter  |                     |
| North   | 1 Lay Male      | Aaron Schmalzle    | Steven Beumer        |                     |
| North   | 1 PCLE          | Linda Rivera       |                      |                     |
| Youth   | Male or Female  |                    |                      |                     |
| <b>Synod Council Treasurer (4 Year Term)</b>      |                 |                    |                      |                     |
|   | 1 Lay or Clergy | Jerry Johnson AIM  |                      |                     |
| <b>Consultation Committee (6 Year Term)</b>       |                 |                    |                      |                     |
|   | 2 Lay           |                    |                      |                     |
|   | 2 Clergy        | Rev. Thomas Lyberg | Rev. Jennifer Kopacz | Rev. William Stenke |
| <b>Discipline Committee (6 Year Term)</b>         |                 |                    |                      |                     |
|   | 2 Clergy        | Rev. Arthur Wuertz | Rev. Jeannine Sweet  |                     |

(I) = Incumbent

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## Synod Council Representative

### Southeast Mission District – Lay Female

Name: Ingrid Biesart  
Congregation: Our Savior, Vero Beach  
Conference: 04 – Space Coast  
Gender: Female  
Birth Year: 1946  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Director of Communications, Howard Johnson Corp., NY, 1965-1970. Owner/Operator Dutch Dunkers Inc., Roslyn, NY, 1970-1985 (AKA Dunkin Donuts). Florida Realtor, Caldwell Banker, Vero Beach, FL 1992-1996 (still licensed but inactive).

Church Leadership & Participation: Volunteer in church office past 8 years. Leader of Social Ministry past 6 years. Involved in Vacation Bible School/Day Camp past 8 years. Church Council Member 6 years. Communion Assistant past 8 years.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): I was baptized in 1946 at Christ Lutheran, Floral Park, NY, and confirmed 12 years later. My Lutheran roots run deep. I am passionate and committed to the church and her future. My life experiences have gifted me with humanity, humor, humility and willingness, all of which I bring to the table.

**Synod Council Representative**  
**Southeast Mission District – PCLE**

Name: Frank Burga  
Congregation: Abiding Savior, Fort Lauderdale  
Conference: 02 - Broward Bahamas  
Gender: Male  
Birth Year: 1979  
Primary Language: Spanish



Occupation/Education Experience: 18 years Customer Service, Sales & Marketing experience. Attended Rowan University for Business Administration, Minor French Language and Culture. Currently manage a diverse team of 37 people. Focus on delivering great customer service.

Church Leadership & Participation: Participate and member of Todos Los Santos. Help with food pantry distribution, fund raising activities with “El Centro” de Todo Los Santos (at Abiding Savior Fort Lauderdale). Assisted in summer camp program sessions.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): Honest firsthand feedback on the challenges faced by first generation immigrants in our community. Assist in readings during service.

## **Synod Council Representative Southwest Mission District – Clergy**

Name: Rev. Paul Gibson  
Congregation: Trinity, St. Petersburg  
Conference: 14 - Suncoast  
Gender: Male  
Birth Year: 1964  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Bachelor of Music and post-graduate study, University of Miami, Coral Gables (1988). Master of Divinity, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia (2014). Professional opera singer, 1986-2000. Anglican Benedictine monk, 2000-2006. Pastor, 2014 to present.

Church Leadership & Participation: Church administrator, St. George's Anglican/Episcopal, Berlin, Germany (1996-2000). Church administrator and pastoral care coordinator, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Clearwater, FL (2007-2014). Pastor, Trinity Lutheran, St. Petersburg, FL (2014-Present).

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): Recent seminary education, experience living and working in diverse cultures, love of Lutheran theology and its unique gifts to 21<sup>st</sup> century life, experience of marginalization in church and society.

## **Synod Council Representative Southwest Mission District – Clergy**

Name: Rev. Rob Rose

Congregation: Calvary, Apollo Beach

Conference: 13 - Tampa

Gender: Male

Birth Year: 1968

Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Over the past twenty years I have worked at three different Lutheran churches – one in St. Louis and two in Florida. Additionally, I also worked at Van Dyke UMC in Tampa. I received by BA from USF and my Master’s from Asbury Theological Seminary. Additionally, I earned a Graduate Certificate in Non-Profit Management and Innovation from the University of Tampa Sykes Business School.

Church Leadership & Participation: Presently I am Associate Pastor at Calvary. Prior, I was a local pastor at Van Dyke UMC. I led the staff for: missions, volunteers, coffee house, bookstore, children, junior high, high school, college, discipleship, childcare and day school. During two years of my time there, I was also interim Executive Director of Cornerstone Family Ministries. I was responsible for reorganizing this 100 years old, inner-city ministry. Evan though it had an \$8.2 million dollar budget, it was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): I like to build bridges and find common solutions. I strive to listen to all parties who have concerns and find common ground whenever possible. I like putting a plan into action and not just talking about it. I believe the past holds our rich heritage and provides a foundation as we work to find new ways to face today’s challenges.

## **Synod Council Representative Southwest Mission District – Clergy**

Name: Rev. Ray Branstiter

Congregation: Lamb of God, Fort Myers

Conference: 11 - Caloosa

Gender: Male

Birth Year: 1951

Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Spiritual Care Counselor (Chaplain), Hazelden/Betty Ford Foundation 2013-Present. Retired Chief Petty Officer, United States Navy, 1970-1992. BA Chapman University, Orange, California. MS in Operational Management, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. MDiv Lutheran Theological Seminary, Gettysburg, PA – Ordained June 1, 2000. Board of Directors, Griggs/Steele County Empowerment Zone, Cooperstown, ND 2005-2007. Board of Directors, Red Willow Bible Camp, Eastern North Dakota Synod, Binford, ND 2003-2007.

Church Leadership & Participation: Lead Pastor, Tri-County Ministry, Eastern North Dakota Synod, Cooperstown, ND 2000-2007. Executive Director, Lost & Found Ministry and Pastor, Recovery Worship, Fargo, NC, 2007-2013.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): Extensive experience serving on various boards and committees of various churches and non-profit organizations. Committed to the ELCA and the Florida-Bahamas Synod and both units' mission and ministry.



## **Synod Council Representative Southwest Mission District – Clergy**

Name: Rev. Sean Bunger

Congregation: Gateway Trinity, Fort Myers

Conference: 11 - Caloosa

Gender: Male

Birth Year: 1971

Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Currently serve as Pastor of Gateway Trinity in Fort Myers (5 ½ years). I served as Associate Pastor of St. Luke in Gales Ferry, CT, prior to this call. I graduated from Wartburg Theological Seminary with an MDiv in 2006. My career prior to ordained ministry included Youth Ministry and Marketing.

Church Leadership & Participation: I served on the Continuing Theological Education team of the New England Synod from 2008-2010. I am also active in supporting the Golisano Children’s Hospital and Community Cooperative Soup Kitchen through fundraising activities and leadership.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): I have a passion for congregational ministry and the energy the people of God can bring to the community around them. Ministry is about relationships and how we create opportunities to share God’s love. I believe my gifts of listening and responding to contextual needs can be an asset in talking about the larger church.

## Synod Council Representative

### North Mission District – Lay Male

Name: Aaron Schmalzle  
Congregation: Trinity Kissimmee  
Conference: 08 – Heart of Florida  
Gender: Male  
Birth Year: 1982  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: I am currently a discipleship trainer and coach, conducting seminars for leadership teams and churches. My team received a Together in Mission grant to train churches in the Florida-Bahamas Synod. My graduate specialty is in church health and wellness initiatives. As a healthcare executive, I have been called to many exciting opportunities that include creating a national wellness program for clergy, non-profit leadership and computerizing health records in East Africa. Ultimately, God’s path for me has led to an intensive focus on community development and faith formation. I have been called as a mission developer to start a new model of ministry in the church. In the next year, we will be opening Castle Church Brewing Community, the very first craft brewery with Word and Sacrament ministry, owned by a church.

Church Leadership & Participation: Florida-Bahamas Synod Council and Executive Committee; Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio, Board of Directors; Trinity Church and School, Kissimmee, School Board; Trinity Church and School, Kissimmee, New Life Discipleship group; website/tech committee; MOJO Men’s Fellowship; Cooks! Group; Trekkers Outdoors Club Ministry; The 7 Habits of Jesus: Handbook for Discipleship co-author and training seminar Facilitator/coach; online/website coordination; Castle Church Brewing Community mission developer/brewer of craft beer: Come Tap into Community.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position: I feel both blessed and humbled by the various ways that God has called me to serve in our church. If asked to serve on Synod Council again, I pray that my talents for administration and my professional and life experiences may be used to help more fully express Christ’s love and mission of reconciliation in the world. I look forward to “Bolding Sharing Christ, Passionately Making Disciples and Faithfully doing Justice” as a member of the Synod Council.

**Synod Council Representative**  
**North Mission District – Lay Male**

Name: Steven Beumer  
Congregation: St. John Winter Park  
Conference: 08 – Heart of Florida  
Gender: Male  
Birth Year: 1954  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Owner for over 30 years of National Benefit Service Center, that provides exceptional insurance benefits for companies and individuals across the country.

Church Leadership & Participation: Bishops Consultation Committee – currently serve. Formerly served on Florida-Bahamas Synod Council. Florida-Bahamas Synod Malaria Coordinator – raised over \$265,000. Global/Local Team Leader at St. John. Churchwide Anti-Racism Training. Served on Florida-Bahamas Synod Global Mission for 19+ years.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position: Awarded in 2015 White House Champion of Charge – Faith Leaders Advocating for the Environment – one of 12 awarded nationwide. Elected to Soil & Water Conservation District Council for Orange County. Awarded “Home Town Hero” by Brighthouse News 13. Former Lay Director of Via de Cristo.

## Synod Council Representative

### North Mission District – PCLE

Name: Linda Rivera  
Congregation: Iglesia Ev. Luterana Cristo Rey, Orlando  
Conference: 08 – Heart of Florida  
Gender: Female  
Birth Year: 1959  
Primary Language: Spanish



Occupation/Education Experience: Work Experience: 2010-Present: Executive Assistant for the Senior VP at RIDA Development Corp. in ChampionsGate for the last 6 years; 2009-2010: Assistant to Financial Advisor at Ameriprise, Orlando; 2008-2009: Executive Assistant to CEO and COO of American Red Cross, Orlando; 2003-2008: Executive Assistant for CEO at Smart City Telecom, Lake Buena Vista, FL. Education: 1 ½ years college at University of Alaska-Fairbanks (Accounting); Secretarial Studies Certificate; Computer Programming Certificate.

Church Leadership & Participation: Have been involved in the life of the church of Christ on multiple levels, from regular and foundational member to Congregational Council member with a combined total of 4 years as president; Bible school teacher and catechumenate; prepare weekly bulletin and marketing material for Cristo Rey including website; prepare PowerPoint presentations used during worship, including selecting hymns and prepare videos; serve as Worship Leader, assistant to Pr. George Cruz-Martinez, and Church Secretary; completed ELCA Behavioral Interviewer Training; currently on my 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the Diakonia Program; and current member of the Synod Council – Member at Large.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): God has given me many talents to use for His Glory: fully Bilingual (born and raised in Puerto Rico); sensitive to a variety of cultures; female compassion and sensitivity; blessed with the opportunity to work with different Bishops and Pastors, including Bishop Rev. Rafael Malpica and Bishop Rev. Edelmiro Cortes; ability to translate documents to Spanish that will serve as a resource to our Hispanic brothers and sisters.

## Synod Treasurer

### Lay or Clergy

Name: Jerry Johnson, AIM

Congregation: Trinity, Jacksonville

Conference: 06 - First Coast

Gender: Male

Birth Year: 1950

Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: By the grace of God: 29 years Associate in Ministry, called by the ELCA Church Council to serve as Regional Manager, Mission Investment Fund, providing investment and loan opportunities to ELCA members and ministries for the past 9 years; 20 years CBA St. John, Winter Park; FCBA Union Seminary, Richmond, VA.

Church Leadership & Participation: By the grace of God: 12 years synod treasurer; 10 years treasurer Lutheridge/Lutherock (Novus Way); 3 years treasurer LOMF; 5 times Churchwide Assembly voting member; 6 years Synod Council; and various other leadership positions in all three expressions of this church with an emphasis on accountability and internal control.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less): During my 18 cumulative years as synod council member/treasurer serving with three bishops and one interim bishop, we have seen very good times, some bad times, stable times, changing times and scary times. Through it all, our financial condition has remained strong and stable as my faith sustains me in this work. I would bring the experience of the past to the leadership of the future in an informative, constructive, dependable and faithful way.

## Discipline Committee

### Clergy

Name: Rev. Arthur Wuertz  
Congregation: Faith, DeLand  
Conference: 05 – Flagler Volusia  
Gender: Male  
Birth Year: 1961  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience:

Pastor of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, DeLand 2006 – present; Dean, Flagler-Volusia Conference 2007-2008; Council Visitor, “Mission Possible” Campaign; U.S. Navy veteran 1981-2001; graduate of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC; President, West Volusia Hospital Authority – Citizens Advisory Committee, 2013-2014; Chairperson, West Volusia CROP Walk.

Church Leadership & Participation:

Pastor, Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, DeLand 2006 – present; Congregation President 2013; Dean, Flagler-Volusia Conference 2007-2008; Congregation President, Lutheran Church of Honolulu 1998.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less):

Honesty, integrity, listening, faithfulness, love for the church and the various offices of ministry.

## Discipline Committee

### Clergy

Name: The Rev. Dr. Jeannine Sweet  
Congregation: Reformation, Lakeland  
Conference: 07 – Lake  
Gender: Female  
Birth Year: 1946  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience:

Retired Parish Pastor with expertise in administration/communication. Taught college, graduate and preK. High school tutor in English, reading, writing. Specializing in group thought process, problem solving and communication both verbal and nonverbal.

Church Leadership & Participation:

Served on Synod Council, Delegate to National Assembly; Adjunct faculty Wartburg Seminary; Educational planning committee; Discipline Committee; Conference Dean.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less):

Published author – subject was church problem solving and communication. Workshop leader – local and national – same topics. Taught classes for women in verbal defense. Gifts in teaching and preaching.

## Consultation Committee

### Clergy

Name: Rev. Thomas Lyberg  
Congregation: St. John Winter Park  
Conference: 08 – Heart of Florida  
Gender: Male  
Birth Year: 1964  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Senior Pastor, St. John Winter Park. Capital University 1986; trinity Lutheran Seminary 1990. Trained Transitional Ministry certification from the Interim Ministry Network. Trained leader in Healthy Congregations and Bridgebuilders.

Church Leadership & Participation: Northwestern Ohio Synod: Synod Council; Synod Executive Team; Consultation Committee; Discipline Team; Stewardship Committee. Writer for The Lutheran, Sundays & Seasons, and Bread For the Day.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less):

I bring 25 years of ordained experience in small and large congregations as well as focused training in areas of clergy and congregational dysfunction. I would be honored to serve.



## Consultation Committee

### Clergy

Name: Rev. Jennifer Kopacz  
Congregation: Grace Tallahassee  
Conference: 10 – Panhandle  
Gender: Female  
Birth Year: 1975  
Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Currently serving Grace in Tallahassee; previously served a three-point parish in rural central Pennsylvania. Received a bachelor's degree in psychology and spent ten years in social service work, primarily with victims of violent, interpersonal crime, before entering seminary in 2007.

Church Leadership & Participation: Served on the Small Church Mission Team in the Upper Susquehanna Synod, PA, helping smaller congregations develop mission and outreach goals and using the unique gifts they bring to minister to their communities. Was one of 65 people chosen to attend the ELCA Equipping for Peacemaking Training, Chicago, in April, 2007.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less):

Excellent written and verbal communication skills; dedication to justice and the desire to serve the church; ability to listen to both sides of an issue; comfortable dealing with difficult subjects and engaging in difficult conversations.

## Consultation Committee

### Clergy

Name: Rev. William Stenke

Congregation: Lutheran Church of the Cross  
St. Petersburg

Conference: 14 – Suncoast

Gender: Male

Birth Year: 1969

Primary Language: English



Occupation/Education Experience: Senior Pastor, Lutheran church of the Cross, St. Petersburg. I am a graduate of Eastern Michigan University (1991) and Trinity Lutheran Seminary (1996). Over 20 years, I have served all sizes of churches as both a solo pastor and part of a team ministry.

Church Leadership & Participation: I have served as a Synod Youth Team Member, Dean of Leadership Training School in Southeastern Michigan, a First Call Mentor, and the Dean of the Flint Cluster in Southeastern Michigan Synod. I am currently Dean of the Suncoast Conference in the Florida-Bahamas Synod.

Specific Gifts or Talents You Bring to Position (50 words or less):  
I have synodical leadership experience, 20 years of parish ministry, and I have ELCA coach certification.