



2023 VA Synod Bishop Election—Advice on communicating with your congregation/ministry context about being open to nomination



New to the VA Synod Bishop Election process this year is the opportunity for pastors who are open to nomination to submit biographical information for voting members to review ahead of the first (nominating) ballot. Some concern has been shared that this could lead to additional “heartburn” in the congregations which are served by pastor who identify themselves as open to nomination. The following advice has been compiled to help you think through how to best communicate in your context.

You do NOT have to submit your biographical information ahead of time. If you think doing so would cause undo harm in your ministry context, the Bishop Election Committee encourages you to prepare your answers for the biographical information form but not submit it until after the first ballot. There have been synods who similarly released biographical information ahead of the first ballot who ended up electing a candidate who had not where the elected bishop was not someone

All pastors who are open to nomination and plan to either submit their biographical information ahead of the first ballot or simply leave their name in if it appears on the first ballot have two options:

1. You can preemptively warn your congregation or ministry context that you are open to nomination.
2. You can be ready to respond to any concerns that arise when your biographical information is made public ahead of the first ballot or you leave your name in if it appears on the first ballot.

Here is some suggested language you are welcome to use whether your communication is preemptive or reactionary.

- You are not “running for bishop”...you are “open to a nomination” and “open to the movement of the Spirit.”
- Feeling called to leave your name in the election for Bishop does not necessarily mean you no longer feel called to continue to serve in your current ministry context if not elected.
- An example from Bishop Humphrey: “In the coming weeks you might hear someone say, “Our Pastor is running for Bishop!” That is not accurate. I feel called and love serving here. But, the Virginia Synod Bishop Election Committee has encouraged all Virginia Synod Pastors to discern whether we might have the gifts and experience needed to serve as Bishop. If so, they requested we provide a photo and biographical information so Voting Members to the 2023 Assembly will have time prior to the Assembly to consider potential nominees. So, I am not “running for bishop.” As always, I am open to where The Holy Spirit may lead and I agree that more information prior to the Assembly is a good change in our process of discernment prior to the election of our next bishop.”