



**2023
Virginia Synod
Assembly**



2023 Virginia Synod Bishop Election–Biographical Information Form

Name	The Rev. Kelly D Bayer Derrick
Pronouns	she/her
Current Position	Assistant to the Bishop of the Virginia Synod
Congregation Membership	St Philip, Roanoke
Date of Ordination	Jun 09, 2007
Previous Calls/Positions (with years, most recent first, as space allows)	Pastor; St Philip, Roanoke (2007-2017) Visiting Lecturer; Hollins University (2011-2022)
Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and year, most recent first)	Master of Sacred Theology; Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, 2016 Master of Divinity; Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, 1997 Bachelor of Arts; University of Virginia, 1992
How will recent continuing education experiences (classes, certifications, etc.) contribute to your service as bishop of this synod?	Continuing education has strengthened my own ministerial skills and biblical and theological knowledge. In 2021, I earned a Certificate in Leadership at Batten Leadership Institute at Hollins University. I engaged with others in leadership topics such as goal-setting, conflict management, team functioning, decision-making, culture building, coaching, and leadership strategy and visioning. Courses at the Katie Geneva Cannon Center for Womanist Leadership at Union Presbyterian Seminary have deepened my knowledge and analysis. Learning with and from my Black sisters in these courses has enriched my faith and life! Auditing courses at United Lutheran Seminary and researching courses I taught at Hollins University continually turned me to the Word and God's beloved creation. Learning together with other faculty and with students opens my mind to diverse gifts and insights shared by God's people.

How will current or past synod or churchwide activities guide your service as bishop of this synod?

I have had the great honor of serving as an Assistant to the Bishop for the past five and a half years. I give thanks for a variety of experiences with God's people across the Synod: being present with God's people across the Synod in worship; working with many gifted people on Synod Council and ministry teams; walking with people who are discerning God's call; listening to the Spirit's call as we vision new ways of doing ministry; advocating for justice, equity, peace, and belonging; and visioning together with the bishop and Synod staff for the wellbeing of the Synod's congregations and people. I have also worked with amazing people across the synods of Region 9 and throughout the ELCA.

As bishop I would look forward to strengthening those relationships and listening to the Holy Spirit about who God is calling the VA Synod to be as together we abide with God and seek to follow Jesus. Some ministries thrive. Some need support. And some need to change. Let's vision together!

How will current or past community-related activities contribute to your service as bishop of this synod?

As people justified by God's grace and transformed by God, God commands us to love our neighbors - which includes knowing our neighbors, engaging their stories, accompanying one another on our journey - so that we grow in relationship together.

The most impactful community-related activity I have participated in is teaching Religious Studies at Hollins University. My students have asked insightful questions, shared vulnerability with each other, uplifted my faith, and also challenged me. Listening to young adults has kept me engaged in the world - which is important for those who serve in the church. As a parent of three active sons, I have been engaged in the community where I live - knowing the schools and leaders, being part of parent groups, hearing the joys and struggles of community, reaching out to neighbors in need and in celebration, and advocating for justice and peace. That community engagement shapes my belief that the church has good news to share with our communities!

What is your vision for the VA Synod?

My vision for the Synod is grounded in God's mission of love. We are God's holy people, servants of God and of one another, God's own beloved. This is who God has made us to be - in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. "For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life." (Eph 2.10)

God has claimed us in baptism; we abide in the covenant God made with us. The mission and vision of the synod flows out of God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying work in the world. As God's people, all that we are and all that we do should flow out of God's gospel of grace and love. We have been made holy and called by God to love God and love one another - to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness, humility, and patience; to be tolerant with and forgive each other; and over all these things to put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. (Col 3.12-14)

What is your understanding of the role of the Bishop (and staff)?

The bishop is a pastor who preaches, teaches, and administers the sacraments in accordance with the scriptures, creeds, and Lutheran confessions; who engages visionary leadership with the people of the synod as together we participate in God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world; who accompanies congregations, rostered ministers, and candidates for ministry in the call process - providing pastoral care in anxious and hopeful times and praying for the Spirit's guidance as congregations, ministry sites, and deacons and pastors discern God's call; who fosters ecumenical relationships; and who provides pastoral care to congregations and rostered ministers.

The Office of the Bishop (bishop and staff) resources congregations and their ordained and lay leaders to assist them in: proclaiming God's saving good news, gathering in worship, sharing faith in Christ, serving God's people, doing justice, engaging people in God's Word, and living together as the body of Christ.

What gifts do you have that would help you fulfill that role and lead the Synod to fulfill its calling from God?

As a child of God, I am overwhelmed by the height, depth, and breadth of God's love for us made known in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and I thank the Holy Spirit for God's gifts to me:

I am pastoral and relational; I care deeply about the wellbeing of others. I am genuinely interested in people's lives and stories. I will listen to you, be fully present with you, and pray with you. You are not alone; God is with you and so am I. I will walk with you, accompany you, love you, ally with you, and advocate for you.

I have high standards for myself and strive to lead a life of integrity and authenticity. As such, I will treat you with dignity and respect.

I love to learn. I am biblically and theologically inquisitive, which makes me an engaging teacher and preacher.

I am a collaborative leader. I invite and embrace the insights and wisdom of others, and appreciate and cultivate the gifts of others - because God's mission is enriched when we work together.

Describe your leadership style.

My leadership style leans into adaptive change - purposefully embracing complex challenges that seem hard to define and solve. Adaptive leadership centers on relationships, working together, welcoming differences, and connecting with values and identity. This is the heart of the gospel and God's invitation to join in God's mission!

Adaptive change is hard; however, I pursue the patient ability to identify a challenge, seek out and listen to others, and build teams which clarify, learn, evaluate, and act.

My leadership is a way of life grounded in God's love. I invite, engage, and celebrate diversity of voices and perspectives so we can vision together. Let's embrace vulnerability and mutuality so we can share hopes and dreams as well as doubts and fears, building trust and community. Let's be authentically present with one another and listen with open hearts to new or unfamiliar ideas, calling one another into conversation, truth-telling, reconciliation, restoration, and reparation.

What does your support system (including your spouse/partner) think about your sense of call to serve as Bishop of the Virginia Synod?

I am truly thankful for the love and support of my family and friends as I have engaged my discernment with the Holy Spirit regarding the call to serve and lead as bishop. Their support has been invaluable and active! My husband and sons have listened to my ponderings and prayers. They have offered honest feedback, sharing insights regarding my gifts and growth areas. They love me so much; for that I am truly grateful. I also have strong support from my extended family - my parents, siblings, in-laws, grandmother, and countless others.

I thank my collegial friends who have encouraged me in my discernment and have also shared feedback regarding my leadership and ministry gifts, as well as insights into who they see God calling the Synod to be.

Finally, I am so very thankful for my friends who are not connected to the VA Synod or to church at all. Even though they are often curious and confused about what exactly we do together as the VA Synod, they support me, challenge me, love me.
