



## 2023 Virginia Synod Bishop Election–Biographical Information Form

<b>Name</b>	Rev Jonathan D Hamman
<b>Pronouns</b>	he/him
<b>Current Position</b>	Pastor, Holy Trinity Wytheville
<b>Congregation Membership</b>	Holy Trinity Wytheville
<b>Date of Ordination</b>	Feb 03, 2002
<b>Previous Calls/Positions (with years, most recent first, as space allows)</b>	Holy Trinity, Wytheville, VA (1 year) Rural Retreat Parish, Rural Retreat, Va (16 yrs. 10 mo.) Ascension, Danville, Va (4yrs 8 mo)
<b>Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and year, most recent first)</b>	Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, 2001 (M. Div, concentration in Town & Country) Roanoke College, 1997 (BA History & Religion)
<b>How will recent continuing education experiences (classes, certifications, etc.) contribute to your service as bishop of this synod?</b>	<p>One of the most meaningful continuing education classes I have taken recently was the Coaching Training offered by the Synod. These classes taught us how to lead people and congregations through listening, asking powerful and meaningful questions, ascertaining their assets, and setting goals to make progress.</p> <p>Coaching is an essential tool for leading individuals and congregations through difficult conversations while affirming that local knowledge and experiences will be the most helpful tools to solve problems and complete tasks. The method of listening and asking questions is something that has become a basic part of my toolbox when in meetings with congregations, councils, and individuals.</p> <p>I have also served as a supervisor and mentor for 12 Interns during my years at Rural Retreat. Providing supervision for Interns has helped me appreciate the workings of Candidacy committees as well as helping former interns navigate first calls.</p>

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

I have served as Dean of the Highland's Conference for 10 years or so. It is an exciting Conference to be a part of. The Highland Conference places a high premium on collegiality among the Pastors. The Congregations also work well together providing annual Lent Rotations, a Corn Roast, and Reformation Service as well as twice-a-month pericope studies and other gatherings among the pastors.

During the pandemic, we choose to work together to provide worship for the churches of the conference. This was done via Zoom, Facebook Live, and YouTube. These worship services brought the pastors together, mostly on Zoom, to lead these services. During this time, we rotated preaching while working together to provide support for one another and leadership in the Conference.

The experience of working together, collegially supporting each other, building consensus, and sharing the highs and lows of ministry, not only during the pandemic, but on a weekly basis is a good model for the Synod.

---

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

I have served on the Board of Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center for 6 years. During this time I learned to appreciate the ministry camps provide. During that time we worked hard to improve the facilities at the camp in order to make the camp more usable for outside groups.

I have also served on the Department of Social Services Board in Wythe County for the last 7 years. This Board oversees the mission of our local agency as it provides Foster Care, support for adoption, and adult protective services as well as administering benefits for residents of Wythe County. During my time on the Board, we were in the unfortunate position of forcing the resignation of the previous director and then hiring someone to bring stability and structure, and rebuilding the culture of the agency. This was an intense period of learning and growth for all of us.

---

**What is your vision for the VA Synod?**

Synod means "journey together." It is my hope that we, as the Virginia Synod, will continue to find ways to journey with one another. In the Highland's Conference (southwest corner of Virginia), rostered leaders, lay leaders, and congregations have been working together for decades to provide worship, leadership, and community to the far-flung congregations in our area. During the pandemic, we worked together to provide online worship and support. We have had conversations about what it would look like if we transformed the Conference into a parish.

It is my vision that these types of conversations would happen throughout the Synod, as appropriate to each area, city, and Conference, in order to facilitate that journeying together. The ministry of mutually building up the body of Christ, sharing joys and sorrows, being there in good times and bad times, and building towards a future of shared mission and ministry is important as we navigate the future of the church together.

---

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

The role of the Bishop is to serve as the pastor, cheerleader, and truth-teller for the Synod's Rostered leaders, congregations, and institutions. The Bishop is called to support the rostered leaders of the Synod, serve as their pastor, and offer encouragement, a listening ear, and ask the tough questions as they navigate ministry. The Bishop is also an important cheerleader in helping congregations and leaders find the support they need to carry out their mission and ministry to and for their communities. The Bishop is also one who needs to speak the hard truth, especially for the marginalized, oppressed, underserved, and ignored members of our society.

The Bishop's staff is called to support the Bishop in these endeavors as well as provide the necessary tools and conversations congregations, leaders, and roster leaders need to have in order to fulfill their call to serve the people Jesus would have us serve in the mission and ministry we share.

---

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

My gifts of Pastoral leadership come from being a congregational pastor for 20+ years, Intern Supervisor for 12 Interns, and Dean for many years. I have been through the good times of congregational life, and I have been through the difficult times of congregational turmoil and conflict around the 2009 sexuality decision, the Pandemic, and my own leadership. Each of these times has enabled me to learn about myself, my support system, and the tools and resources of the Synod, as well as learning to lean on colleagues and friends for advice, a listening ear, and encouragement. I believe I have earned the trust of my colleagues and the ear of the congregations in the Highlands Conference through our time together. I have also learned to use my privileged position and voice as a white, heterosexual middle-aged male to encourage others to listen to those in the marginalized, ostracized, and often set-aside communities in our church and society.

---

**Describe your leadership style.**

My leadership style is one that seeks to build consensus through listening to others, their concerns, and agreements while also seeking to ensure all understand the goals, purpose, and end game. It is essential to ask the right questions, determine if we have the resources and skill set to reach the stated goals, implement plans and timelines that are attainable, and hold people accountable for doing their part.

That said, I also believe a good leader is one who takes responsibility when things go wrong, and shares credit when things are working well. As crucial as consensus building is, it is also important for a leader to stand up for those whose voices are not heard and ensure all voices have a seat at the table.

As a pastor in small towns and rural congregations for most of my ministry, I also know that genuine care and concern go a long way in helping people come along for the journey.

---

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

My spouse has always supported my ministry and will continue to do so wherever and whatever form that takes. We currently have the support necessary at home and in the community to care for the children and farm.

---