

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the ministry of Region 5 as you prepare for and engage in the business of your synod assembly. This synod joins with eleven other synods in Wisconsin, Upper Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois to form Region 5: one of the 9 regions across the ELCA. The ministry of region 5 is roughly divided into 3 categories: convening synod ministry leaders; accompaniment of those preparing to become pastors and deacons; and tending to archival records.

As a region, your synod bishop, staff, and other leaders gather with their colleagues throughout the year. These gatherings are a way for them to support and pray with one another; and to share their ideas, experience and expertise with one another to faithfully minister in your synod. The twelve bishops, along with the regional candidacy manager, make up a regional steering committee. Their collegiality is important in establishing great working partnerships for years to come.

The Region 5 steering committee affirmed in 2023 to work together to provide a 3 year cycle of professional ethics education-aka Boundaries Education. This 3 year cycle will begin in 2024 with a basic professional boundaries education event for rostered ministers and synod authorized lay leaders. Subsequent years in the 3 year cycle will focus on racial justice and gender justice. Region 5 continues to gather bishops and staff in the region on an annual basis for shared support, learning, worship and fellowship. In 2023, we gathered at the ELCA churchwide offices and met with the ELCA Future Directions vision team as well as other ELCA leaders.

As candidacy and leadership manager for region 5, most of my time is spent working alongside synod candidacy committees. “Candidacy” is the term used to describe our process of forming and preparing people to serve as a pastor or deacon in the ELCA. Ministry also includes training for new candidacy staff and volunteer committee members in your synod. ELCA candidacy itself is in a period of review and renewal, to align our process with what the church needs of ministry leaders today. You can find out more information at www.elca.org/formation.

As members of the ELCA we believe that discernment about vocation is holy work for all people. God calls all of us to live out our vocation in community, in service to God and in love toward the neighbor. An online tool, www.journi.faith is for all who are interested in exploring how their gifts for ministry can be put into service throughout the ecology of the ELCA and beyond. I also welcome and encourage your prayers and invitation to those you know who have gifts for rostered ministry. You can learn more about this at www.elca.org/Our-Work/Leadership.

As a region, we also share in the care of archival records. Region 5 archives are housed at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. Our archivist, Sue Dodd, collects records of and responds to inquiries concerning synods, deceased rostered personnel, and dissolved congregations within region 5. This work both preserves institutional records and documents the historical record of the institution within the context of the larger world. As congregations in the region make decisions to close, Sue is a resource to you in determining what records to save and how to transfer them to the archives.

Thank you for your synod’s participation in this shared ministry and for the privilege to serve among you.

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