



**Eastern North Dakota Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM**

### **NOMINEE FOR BISHOP OF THE EASTERN NORTH DAKOTA SYNOD**

1. Name: **Rev. Michael T Jacobson**
2. Current Call (title, ministry, city): **Senior Pastor, Martin's Lutheran Church, Casselton, ND**
3. Congregation Membership (include city): **Martin's Lutheran Church, Casselton, ND**
4. Date and Year of Birth: **November 24, 1969**
5. Date and Year of Ordination: **August 21, 2010**
6. Previous Ministry Positions:
  - **Pastor Trinity Lutheran Church, Cooperstown, ND – 2010 – 2016**
  - **Internship – Trinity Lutheran Church, North Branch, MN – 2008 – 2009 (Stayed additional year, 2009-2010 to assist in calling new senior pastor)**
7. Other Pertinent Employment (non-pastoral work):
  - **Dept. of Navy - Logistics Manager/Civil Servant – Commander Strike Fighter Wing Pacific Fleet, Naval Air Station Lemoore, CA - 2001-2005**
  - **Resource Consultants Inc (RCI) – Lead Analyst – Naval Supply Command - NAVMASSO Chesapeake, VA – 2000 - 2001**
  - **CACI Field Services – Functional Analyst – Commander Naval Air Forces Atlantic Fleet – Norfolk, VA – 1998 – 2000**
  - **Active Duty United States Navy – Aviation Storekeeper - 1988 – 1998**
8. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):
  - **Master of Divinity – Luther Seminary – St Paul, MN - 2010**
  - **Bachelor of Arts – Christian Ministries – Fresno Pacific University – Fresno, CA – 2006**
  - **Associate in Arts – Liberal Arts – West Hills Community College – Lemoore, CA – 2005**
  - **High School Diploma – Park River High School – Park River, ND – 1988**
9. List up to 5 current or past ELCA synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.
  - **Senior Pastor Martin's Lutheran, Casselton ND 2016 – Current; Building a new worship facility, opening in July 2020**
  - **Pastor Trinity Lutheran, Cooperstown ND 2010 – 2016; Trinity Growers Project – 2012 - 2015 raised over \$130,000 for mission partners.**
  - **Chair of the Eastern North Dakota Nominating Committee – 2014 – 2016**
  - **Eastern North Dakota Synod Council – 2011 – 2016; Eastern North Dakota Synod Executive Council – 2014 – 2016; Eastern North Dakota Representative at ELCA Church Wide Assembly – 2013**
  - **Eastern North Dakota Synod – Endowment Committee – 2012 – Current; Review grants for tuition repayment/retirement support for rostered leaders.**



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10. List up to 5 current or past community-related activities that might help inform your service as bishop of this synod.

- **The Graduation Pathway Taskforce - 2020**
- **Represent Martin's Lutheran at Casselton Business Association and Community Task Force – 2016 - present**
- **Boys Golf Coach – Central Cass High School – 2016 – Current, Griggs County High School 2011- 2015**
- **President of Casselton Ministerial Association – 2017 – Current**
- **Bread of Life Food Pantry Board and Griggs County Housing Authority, Cooperstown, ND 2011 – 2016**

11. Identify three prominent faith-inspired themes that others would say are strongly evident in your preaching, teaching, leading, and living.

**Love of God and One Another would be at heart of what others hear from me both in words and actions, within our congregation and community. We are called to love people where they are at, not where we think they should be. I am constantly reminding people that we need to be the church for not only those of us on the inside, but also for those that are on the outside and the fringes or have not heard of Christ's love for them yet. When I have interviewed for calls, I remind the committee that if they want me to be the pastor to only the people of the congregation, I am not their guy. I believe I am called to serve all who call and are seeking out someone to walk for a little while with them on their journey.**

**Trust and Faith in our Christian walk, even though we are not always in the same place on our journey and may have doubts at times we know that we are still loved. We all have faced and will continue to face challenges in our lives, and I try to remind people that Christ did not promise life would all be easy. He promised that He will be with on the journey, which include the deep and dark days. I remind people that they are always welcome in our church family. People have told me they appreciate the transparency and acceptance I have shown in my leadership, inside our congregation and in the community.**

**Disciplined discipleship in sharing God's Word and Love for His people. We are all called to share the gospel in a way that all can hear that God does love them and has a plan for them. We need to be open to see and hear the good in all people and allow them to serve in anyway possible. How we disciple and hear along our faith journeys very greatly, but Christ is still at the center of it all as Christians. When we share, we must remember that we are resurrection people and given permission to share His good news; but also, that we are held accountable for our actions towards others and the world we have been given.**



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12. What gifts/strengths would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod?

**Listening to people/congregations to find out their story and what it is that they want to accomplish as their mission/ministry, then finding a path forward to live out that mission/ministry. Throughout my work history, I have been able to bring people together and find a common bond that assists us to move together down the path of life for a shared mission/ministry. God has blessed us with ears, but too many times we do not use them effectively to listen to the needs and concerns people have in their lives. People are not always looking for someone to give them answers or a solution to their issue, but all want to be acknowledged, heard, and willingness to walk with them on the road to a solution.**

**Building community is important, it starts with loving who you are, as a person, congregation, community, synod, and denomination, to be able to complete the mission of the church of loving our neighbor. Inherently we all want to belong to and be part of something that is bigger than ourselves for the sake of the gospel. Together as the body of Christ we must find common ground to do the work required and build each other up, understanding that no member or part of the body/organization is better than the other.**

13. What helps you to manage your time and be responsive to the organizational details of administration?

**Time Management is a hard concept for anyone in ministry, as we never know if an emergency will take place. This is important as a leader for all aspects of life not only your area of work; but, also for family and self-care. I personally use my calendar to set appointments not only for the work engagements, but the other aspects of my life as well to ensure that I have a healthy balance to be the best pastor, husband, father, grandfather, friend and self that I can be.**

**Organization skills I believe are important for any leader, to be able to compartmentalize and multi-task for the fast pace world. The training I received in the service really emphasized the use of analyzing situations to always look for new or different ways to accomplish a task more efficiently and effectively for the safety of all. This allows me also to look for team members who have the skill set required to help in the success of the tasks required to be performed. I believe my organization skills allow for transparency and sharing of ideas and skills to allow for flexibility and coverage of the overall organization. I believe one of the best ways a person manages their time is to have a staff that is equipped to face any challenges that may come their way, with coverage capabilities as we never know from day to day what may take us away from our normal duties. I try to be mindful throughout any process that we must have a pulse on the community we are leading and therefore we cannot ignore the emotional needs of our people or staff.**



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14. How would people who have worked with you describe your leadership style?

**I believe that people would describe my leadership style using these two quotes. "Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the Company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!" (Romans 12:16 NLT) "Leadership is energizing a community of people toward their own transformation in order to accomplish a shared mission in the face of a changing world." (Tod Bolsinger) I try hard as a leader to let all people in the organization know that their voice counts to make the organization run and be effective for the sake of the mission/ministry. It is something I have understood my entire adult life, working my way up through the many organizations I have had the pleasure of being part of in my different careers. People have the solutions to solve the problems and ideas on how to share the gospel, as leaders we need to give them the permission to do so. Jesus gave the Great Commission, calling us to do ministry; as leaders that is our responsibility to help people find the tools needed and equip them to succeed in their mission/ministry. As a leader, I take responsibility, but never do the work alone.**

15. What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it?

**Communication is always a challenge when geographically we are separated and contextually, we are diverse in economies and landscapes, which affect how we are and do ministry/church. There is no one size fits all approach to how our different churches or ministries function. However, the one thing we can control is building up relationships with one another to come up with best practices and innovative ideas on how together we be and do church, as the body of Christ. The challenge becomes what is our mission as a congregation for our particular area and how do we then fit within the confines and mission of the synod. Relationships do not happen overnight but take work from all parties to be effective and successful. Paul was a great example of this, as he came alongside the people, he was called to bring the Gospel message to, during his ministry. We too need to fashion that concept and idea, by being transparent and sharing of our ideas and concepts of being the church together.**

16. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Church has had to pivot, adapt and be creative. What do you think is the greatest opportunity that has emerged, and how might we carry that forward as a "new normal" for the Church?

**I believe that COVID-19 has made us do somethings that we should always be doing as the church. We should always be ready to meet people where they are and using every tool that we have available in the toolbox to spread the gospel message. I believe that for too many years we did not allow ourselves to think outside the box. I believe that this time of the pandemic has reminded us first and foremost that the church is not our buildings, but our members. Our buildings may be a place to strengthen our relationships, but the true work of the church happens in our everyday lives of serving others God has placed before us. We are a product of the Reformation and as such we should be reforming the way we are and do ministry as we are guided through the work of the Holy Spirit.**



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17. Share one thing, not addressed in the questions above, that you feel is important for people to know about you.

**One thing that I feel people should know about me. I genuinely love ministry and what we have the privilege of doing as pastors and leaders in our church body. I have a deep love for our synod and the congregation that I currently serve in Casselton. I have a passion for bringing people together and doing ministry, through love and service to each other. The foundation for that passion is found in the Theology of the Cross, that each and everything we do should not point to ourselves and our actions, but to Christ! It is in that light that we should answer the call to serve using the gifts and talents we have been given through the work of the Holy Spirit, trusting that God does indeed have a plan for us all to share His love with others.**