

**2022 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM
NOMINEE FOR BISHOP OF THE GREATER MILWAUKEE SYNOD**

1. Name: Michelle Townsend de Lopez

2. Current Position: Parish Pastor

3. Congregation Membership: Cross Ev. Lutheran, Milwaukee WI

4. Date and Year of Ordination: June 7, 2009

5. Previous Positions:

Pentecost Lutheran Church - Solo Pastor 6/2009 - 4/2010 Milwaukee
Good Shepherd/San Francisco de Assisi Lutheran Church - Interim Intern 10/2007-5/2008 Chicago
Multicultural Center of Lutheran School of Theology @ Chicago African-American/Latinx Assistant to
Director 10/2007- 6/2008 Chicago
Previant, Goldberg, Uelmen et al, S. C. Bilingual Paralegal Milwaukee 3/2005-8/2005

6. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first):

Family Therapy Training Institute	Master's Certification Marriage & Family Therapy	August 2019
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago	Hispanic Studies/Master's of Divinity	May 2009
Bishop's Initiative/ Wartburg Seminary	Youth & Family Minister Certification	2005
Complutense Universidad de Madrid	Spanish/ Political Science BA	1989
Rufus King College Prep High School Milwaukee	Diploma	1984

7. What gifts will you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1000 characters maximum) **

Diversity and strong leadership skills that come less from my ability to manage others, but to inspire them to reach their ever-growing potential. This creates a proactive environment where people feel and know they are valued and that is such an essential piece of equipping leaders. One piece of strong leadership embodies empowerment. I have grown into manifesting this as part of who I am as I've been nurtured in my family of origin and church family. We live this out everyday in what we do and how we treat each other, our community and each other. It is part of our mission and purpose. My life experiences have made me incredibly self-aware; which allows me to be perceptive and relationable and to tap into people's emotions. I know my own strength and I am able to skillfully use language to emotionally connect with those around me in any setting. This further allows me to connect, engage and grow authentic relationships with others.

8. What experiences in your life have prepared you for the responsibilities of synod bishop?
(1,000 characters maximum) **

My entire life and the body that I inhabit has effectively prepared me for this opportunity, the responsibilities of the office and people's lives. Early in life, I learned the importance of being open, curious and accepting of diverse people and situations which was taught in my family of origin and reflected in my educational settings from nursery school through high school. Those experiences taught me how to value difference rather than remain ignorant about people, places and things that were new for me. It served me well in understanding the privilege of being raised in a middle class U.S. context when I went to school in Spain and later was a volunteer missionary in El Salvador. I also have been active on boards in leadership positions for religious institutions, public education, diversity and LGBTQIA+ that sharpened skills for compromise and consensus in policies and procedures and occasionally making dreams a collective reality.

9. What do you see as the principal challenge for this synod's bishop in the next six (6) years?
(1,000 characters maximum) **

A continuous changing landscape particularly as we move from the pandemic to an epidemic and how that has impacted how we did church and currently doing church. It offers challenges on engagement, but it also has pushed us to be more daring and to think about innovation and re-inventing ourselves in a way that we can be purposeful, and intentional about our identity and reclaiming the basics in a new way. I also believe there will be more closings, but whether they are HOLY closings that bring a gift to others in different forms remains to be seen, but I am hopeful that it will be. And effectively working to tighten up some practices and innovate others, so that we can be more faithful about practices and engagement around candidacy, calls and more diverse leadership across the various intersections that is more inclusive and representative of the various demographics of our synod.

10. If you could change one thing in the administration or organization of this synod, what would it be? (1,000 characters maximum) **

To be intentional about making our synod more universal and reflective of what we say Jesus would want to see in our institution. In order to accomplish this it would be imperative to have a culturally competent synod staff that is diverse and representative of the people that we serve, so that we can address the barriers and issues that hinder us from doing the faithful work that openly acknowledges who we are as a rural, suburban and urban synod that has a majority European descent population that is equally diverse as the Bipoc (Black, indigenous, people of color) and LGBTQIA+ people that belong to this faith community. Having said that, finding authentic ways of having honest and hard conversations to break down the systems and institutional practices that keep us from valuing and understanding one another in order to equip each other to do the necessary work in building the kin-dom.

11. Describe your leadership style. (1,000 characters maximum)

My style is grounded in personal agency by ensuring my staff as much autonomy as possible. I try to create and cultivate a culture of respect where people feel psychologically safe to share their preferences and perspectives candidly. I am authentic and my social identity is incorporated into the way that I lead which includes building a culture of inclusive leadership, so others are empowered to bring their authentic selves to work. I am someone who is collaborative and equally decisive. I encourage wholeness by making space for people to gain clarity about what they need which allows for questions, connections and opportunities for me to show support to empower them to manage any work-life conflicts, so that we are more resilient as a team. And lastly, embodying humility is essential in being able to listen, empathize and grow.

12. In what ways can/should a synodical bishop impact situations of unjust treatment and/or discrimination toward rostered ministers or candidates? (1,000 characters maximum)

Directly being guided by the Holy Spirit and following the professional ethics and morals that are or should be in place and expected from this office. If this is a public matter being timely and in concert with appropriate committee/council to make an official statement that is purposeful and succinct. We have a number of social statements from the ELCA that state what and how we are to be towards our siblings and moreover the model and teachings of Jesus Christ and these insidious matters would not be tolerated but addressed with equity, transparency and justice and care for all persons involved.

13. What is a justice issue that the synod has not addressed adequately in the past, and what would you do about it as bishop in the next six years? (1,000 characters maximum)

The synod has not moved urgently in addressing systemic and institutional racism, homophobia and discrimination and continuing to not do so, puts us at serious risks for attracting the best and brightest ordained and lay leaders as well as losing the rich diversity of all God's people in our parishes.

1. Diverse (Ethnic/Racial/Age) synod staff
2. Synod council be given power to have a process in place to hold synod staff and candidacy accountable to duties, policy and procedures with respect to the aforementioned.
3. New approaches to shortlisting and interviewing which place a duty on Candidacy/Synod Staff to improve active recruitment & participation for under-represented groups (i.e. 2+ career, bipoc, lgbtqia+, ability) to be sought out rather than being passive in this process & enthusiastic about the gifts of candidates.

14. What training or educational resources have you engaged in the past six years to address racism and queer-phobia? (1,000 characters maximum)

Leadership On The Way: Enneagram & Race, Race, Ethnicity, LGBTQ+ & Christian Faith
Cultural Somantics Training Institute- Racialized Trauma & Healing 2021
Advent Cedarburg Anti-racism Conversation & Resources 2021
Having Our Say 1 & 2 Anti-Racism & Equity Training 2021 - 2022
DPI: Educational Equity Leadership Series -Racism, Equity, Gender & Identity 2019-2020
Cross Partnership/YWCA Anti -Racism 2 day workshop-2016
Cross Roads Anti-Racism Training (Multiple times, MKE -Chicago)
YWCA Unlearning Racism Training-2009

*** Also asked of pre-identified candidates in interview videos.*

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