

Name: Matthew T Larson

Current Position: Pastor

Congregation Membership: Advent Lutheran Church, Spokane Valley, WA

Ordination Date: June 25, 1999

Previous Positions:

- Pastor, Grace Lutheran and Community Presbyterian Potlatch, ID
- St. Philips Lutheran Carmel Valley, CA
- Twin Harbors Lutheran Grayland, WA
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Spokane Valley, WA



Education and Earned Degrees:

- Master of Divinity Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley CA 1999
- Bachelor of Music Performance Washington State University Pullman, WA 1993

List up to five current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod:

- Active on all three campus ministries in our synod. WSU - student member, U of Idaho - while Pastor in Potlatch, EWU - current member 14 years, president 11 years.
- Synod Council, current member 6 1/2 years
- First Call Theological Education leader 2005-2012
- Lutheran Ecumenical Resource Network 2000-2005
- Dean of the Spokane Valley Cluster 2017-current

List up to five current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

- Committee member to pass Library bond in Spokane Valley, WA
- Spokane Valley Summer Theater participant/actor

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod?

I like to engage in more than one set of parameters. Example, I was a residence hall president and a founding father of a new fraternity at WSU. The Graduate Theological Union that PLTS is a part of, let me explore many seminaries and institutes that not only helped me shape my own faith but helped me engage with others in their faith journeys. My first call was to a Lutheran-Presbyterian parish. And then I went and led an even harder ecumenical consolidation of

Lutherans and Lutherans (humor). Advent Lutheran is comprised of Good Shepherd, Christ, and some of Holy Trinity all Spokane Valley. We have been Advent almost 12 years now.

- I engage with people from varied political and social viewpoints and make them feel heard and laugh with them.
- I am a confident fundraiser.
- I diffuse high anxiety situations well. I can be serious and humorous. I rely on others for support, knowledge, and opinion.
- I love to teach Scripture, especially the Gospels.
- I am curious and I am grounded.

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

Survival. We have been in multi-year conversations about survival in one way or another. These have been hard and sometimes fruitful conversations. We have tried doing the business of the Synod differently (Networkers) and the same as we have in the past. We have done more with less. Our congregations are doing the same. I am especially concerned about our small rural congregations that are struggling both in size and how to keep doing church as before. I believe we can find ways to connect our congregations together through technology, improvised leadership, and partnership. Why couldn't we bring in worship electronically from another congregation? Have leadership that would assist in the worship concurrently with the broadcast? Partner up with larger congregations to help with visitation, study, and other needs? We as a synod would help equip and oversee people to minister, to assist, to spread out the responsibility, and to budget for fruitful ministry.

Describe your leadership style.

Some of my strengths are the ability to act quickly and am comfortable in making decisions even when limited information or detail is given. As I said above, I maintain an even-handed manner even in the midst of controversy and anxiety. I have the ability to generate new, often unusual ways of accomplishing things, especially in the midst of addressing issues that do not have a "canned" solution. I believe in teamwork, especially those who are my opposite in how decisions are made and actions are taken. I believe my relationship with whomever I am with is always more important than the issue at hand. I try to exemplify grace to others as God has given me grace first.