

Name: Rev. Kristen E.M. Kuempel

Current Position: Bishop of the NW Intermountain Synod

Congregation Membership: First Lutheran Church of Kennewick

Ordination Date: 09-08-2002

Previous Positions:

- Bishop of NWIM
- Lead pastor First Lutheran Kennewick (2010-2017)
- Bridge pastor at First Lutheran Kennewick (2009-2010)



Education and Earned Degrees:

- MDiv Luther Seminary 2002
- Bachelors from EWU
- 95-98 Associate Columbia Basin College

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

- Elected bishop 2017
- Chair of the Synod/Churchwide committee of the Conf. Of Bishops 2018-present
- Churchwide Assembly voting member 2019 & 2022
- Elected as At-Large EWAID Synod Council Member 2015
- Synod Assembly worship committee chair 2015

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

- Member/participant in various advocacy groups (rural ministry; justice work)
- Lay leadership development/education to help ease pastoral shortage

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

A gift of enthusiasm, generosity, collaboration, imagination, compassion, preaching, conflict resolution, group facilitation, curiosity, grace. An understanding of the work being asked of the church across all expressions (congregational, synodical, and Churchwide); connections to resources; relationships with parachurch organizations that can be leveraged into skill-building for congregational leaders (i.e. organizing grant writing workshop through Lutheran Community Services for synodical leaders); share news of NWIM with other synods in the ELCA.

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

The principal challenge that is facing the church is a challenge of numbers. Some numbers are too big, some are too small. In some ways, this is the same challenge that faced us in 2017—but our years of pandemic have only exacerbated those realities. A question I’m asked all the time “How do we do church now?!” I wish that we could be church without worrying about numbers, but I believe we can be a church that worries less about numbers and more about being church. The system is anxious, and Jesus tells us to “cast all your cares upon me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” How do we, as the NW Intermountain Synod, live into that command?

Describe your leadership style.

Collaboration is important. By myself, I only have a portion of the story. Together, we have a clearer idea of what is happening & what is to come. I have intentionally crafted a synod staff that while we have very specific areas of responsibility, we also collaborate extensively through shared information where appropriate, feedback, curiosity, etc. I often bring a high-level of energy and enthusiasm to tasks, events, conversations, worship services, etc. I’m also very willing to admit when I am wrong, make amends, and correct the course where needed.