

Procedure:

Participants gathered at Messiah Lutheran Church in Winnipeg and connected on line from Hilldale/Thunder Bay and Eriksson, Manitoba (with phone link from Flin Flon). Table talks elicited the notes presented below. Participants reported to the larger group their key points (indicated in italics) and written notes were gathered and collated as below. Where tables reported similar opinions, these have been grouped as such.

Collated Notes:***1) What are we hearing collectively so far? (ie., from the January and February discussions at your council meetings and in your congregations)***

-David was not the choice Jesse thought God would call, he brought all his other sons before calling David in from the fields. (We do not always 'pick' the person, God picks the person, we need to practice aligning ourselves with his desire)

-God says, "listen to elders" God often speaks through youth...and still today these values hold true

-we can be surprised by who God calls, God is not constrained by our expectations ;)

-David's sin came up in several of the group discussions (including today), even though not part of the presented passage. We are often inclined to see the sin and not the good in people..." we see the stick in the other's eye, not the log in our own" again, we are further ahead to focus on God's gifts in the other

-Re January (1Sam.16:1-11): God sees what's in the heart; God may have someone in mind.

-Re Feb. (1Sam.3:1-10): self-identification (a person hears God's call); supported by the church (Eli the priest mentors young Samuel, helps him identify the call); acceptance by the whole community (seen in the call and anointing of the deacons in Acts 6)

-We hope there are people there (like Eli to Samuel) to say "Maybe this is God's voice you are hearing."

-Maybe we are thinking of someone and God is saying, "No, No" God is not looking for someone big in stature but looking at the heart.

-Hopefully it is not a popularity contest

-The old armour does not fit – some traditions will not fit

-Maybe it will take three times for the person to know that God is calling.

-Daunting task – Who (mysterious)

-Terrifying – could be someone unexpected

-Incongruences with the process (ie. Vs business model)

- Removed from the process – people didn't feel engaged in process)
- Process of discernment is new – discernment doesn't happen with incumbent bishops
- We need to pay attention; especially to “matters of the heart”
- Bishop may not have the most impressive looking resume
- Lutheran/Anglican congregations are seeking bishops from both synods + Diocese – desiring someone who can be a “pastor to our pastors”*
- Person must feel and “have a heart” for the calling of a bishop
- None at our table had been to Council meetings/discussions, but we had a past bishop so heard some insights about the past processes
- We appreciate this experience of preparing for the voting process ahead of time
- How do we know who these people are?
- Youngest one – call of David and same with Samuel
- Where is the voice of older experience?
- What is the process?
- Unexpectedness – the importance of a prayerful process
- How do we become contemporary/relevant while remaining faithful?*
- It is sometimes hard to hear when God is calling you... best candidates may be reluctant or hesitant*

2) What are we hearing today that is significant to our process? (ie., from today's Dwelling in the Word and from one another)

- we heard paternalistic language in passage (keep his children submissive, married only once). *These phrases brought us to the conclusion that relationship is all important, with all ages, genders, community*
- aspiring to the office of bishop- we hoped the aspiration was founded in God's call, not a personal desire to “achieve” being bishop
- relationship with broader community is essential, including indigenous, immigrant, organizations in helping professions, caring for God's people*
- The bishop needs:
 - to be respected by the church, by the wider community, and by his family (although we note that we cannot control how other family members respond, no matter how much love, attention, respect and guidance they are given).
 - to be a person of integrity, that is, actions, words, attitudes coincide/are aligned
 - lifestyle that is well managed

-be a good communicator, a good spokesperson, diplomatic, thoughtful, sensitive to various sides, able to carry others' stories with them. Insightful, hold people to the truth, to what's really going on. Aware of how she/he is perceived, what is her/his impact, able to check on how she/he is heard, to follow up.

-able to maintain good communication within the synod, in particular with remoter areas.

-Being "well-thought of by outsiders" is important – not just well thought of by insiders of the church

-Relationships outside are important for building community.

-“Not a lover of money: speaks for itself.

-A large part of the job is management: but those are not the gifts or traits we are looking for.

-The list from 1 Timothy was/is new

-More sharing information about nominees (from wider community)

-Deeper process or question

-Not only task-oriented but also character

-Difference between congregational call process and ecclesiastical ballot for bishop

-There is no “perfect person”

-How do we know the qualifications or temperament of a particular candidate?

-Who is eligible to be on the ballot, ie Anglican, Lutheran, beyond the synod, beyond ELCIC?

-Are retired ordained people eligible?

-As congregations decrease in membership, might bishop be adept at developing partnerships?

-Who is willing to serve?

-Recognizing we have a huge list of choices, we have a concern that delegates do not have a good yardstick to measure candidates and can't apply information until well into the process.

-We want to be mindful of biases/stereotypes, keeping an open mind and trust that there will be a right someone

-We should think beyond local needs; we want a team player with a leader's vision.

-Since God is involved in this process, we may be surprised and need to remember the Spirit is moving.

-At convention, we want time for conversation between ballots.

-Not a topic of conversation at coffee time

-Are there age restrictions?

-This is a new process

-Important because the church is at a crossroad – more so at this time – times of change – needing a new way of thinking eg. Full communion

-Needs to be good at building bridges – good management skills

-What are the legal requirements?

-Bishop must have qualities of big picture thinker – be more missional – administration is needed to support the mission of the church, broader job description

-Avoid politicizing the process; don't overlook the process; ie. Let God lead

-What are "the snares of the devil"?

3) What important points from your discussions do you wish to report at the end of this session?

-Be open to surprises, God is in charge! Practice listening, praying, spiritual practise that draws us closer to god and to one another

-We have an increased awareness of how much we have in common in a contemporary, multi-cultural society, we are learning more each day and each encounter. We need a leader who has such awareness in this "new" culture and who challenges old thinking, who leads us with God's wisdom

-Broader community context across the synod is important for the bishop to have a sense of, we each bear responsibility to share this information that we have discerned.

-The new bishop should have knowledge and understanding about Indigenous history, racism, and sexism.

-There will be a need to prioritize what the synod and bishop can do, from among the many needs, locally, nationally and internationally. What is God's will for our synodical mission? What is feasible?

-What about a new model of church that relies less on church buildings? Should more money and time be spent on communications (and communications technology)?

-We appreciate this process and think it's important – it is a bog decision.

-It's helpful to think about this ahead of time so we can be more efficient at convention and so there is room for the Spirit to be at work in us.

-The old mold doesn't fit. We are looking for something new. And we don't know what it is. (image of armour)

-Important to speak about our experience with people

Part of the discernment process

How to do so constructively?

-Discernment happens in community, in conversations, in our experience

-Might help to develop the discernment process in other areas of congregational life so that it is not so foreign

- Deeper question than the first person we think of
- How can we know in detail the attributes of a prospective bishop?
- Some sense we'd want more time to get to know prospective bishop
- Seeking a bishop who has vision beyond today... and has a sense of present realities*
- Who is eligible? Is there an age requirement?
- How do we know the people – and how do you cast a vote?
- Haven't heard yet about the status of the church – what do we need?
- *The bishop need not have all the skills and abilities – delegation is possible*
- How far afield can candidates come from?

Additional Notes or Comments:

Many thanks for including us in the conversation! And thank you for your part in including our table talk in the big picture!