

Official Biographical Information Form

Nominee for Bishop of South Carolina Synod – 2026

Name: Rev. Richard T. Carter (Rick)

Current Position: Assistant to the Bishop

Congregational Membership: Crossroads **City:** Indian Land

Date and Year of Birth: [REDACTED]

Age Range: 60 Over

Date and Year of Ordination: July 11, 1997

Previous Positions:

Director for Evangelical Mission, SC Synod, ELCA

Mission Developer, Amazing Grace Lutheran, Waxhaw, NC and Crossroads Lutheran, Indian Land

Fee Based Pastoral Therapist/Coach, Methodist Counseling and Consultation Services

Education and Earned Degrees:

Boundary Training, 2025

Board Certified Coach, Center for Credentialing and Education, 2025

Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, 2023

Blue Rio Life Mapping Coaching, 2018

Executive Leadership Coaching, Duke University, 2004

Institute for Clinical Pastoral Counseling and Training, 2003

Lutheran Theological Seminary Gettysburg, MDiv 1997

Certified Financial Planner, 1990

University of the State of NY, Albany, BS Business 1993

Catawba Valley Community College, AA Accounting, 1988

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

Finance Committee Member, SC Synod

Candidacy Committee Member, SC Synod

Stewardship Network Team, SC Synod

Director for Evangelical Mission, ELCA

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

Grief Support Group member and leader.

Mission Leader in the global context, Central America

Work with local migrants and families in transition.

Leadership Coaching Cohort for non-profits.

School Board Member

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

Belief and trust, in our Lord Jesus to guide in all things. For I am fully aware of what I don't know and I lean on the foundation of life – Jesus.

Evangelist! I never miss an opportunity to share Jesus. I love to tell the story.

Compassionate listener and a discerning spirit in working with others. Open to hearing all points of view and finding ways to build bridges and not deepen a divide.

Solution focused coaching, striving always to ask the right questions and providing opportunity for the answer to come through many voices and not simply my own.

Empowering others for leadership. Developing the gifts of others to strengthen the body of Christ and moving out of the way to allow others to serve faithfully.

A financial acumen to ensure strong and faithful stewardship practices that support the ministry of Jesus in the work we have been entrusted to carry out for the church.

Relational and Invitational. I enjoy walking with individuals, teams, and congregations to join up in serving Jesus throughout our communities and the world.

Understanding my challenges as a leader and the need to have the right people around me to be effective as a leader.

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

Redirecting the narrative. Over the last decade and longer, we have faced a pandemic, financial strain, divineness on political and theological grounds, loss of membership and fear at times has directed our ministry among ourselves as congregations and to our neighbors.

The focus needs to be on strengthening and encouraging one another, for our trust and hope is in our Lord. We cannot allow disagreement to divide us. Our disagreements should lead us to open communication. Open communication leads to discovering that we have more in common than differences. The messaging of declining membership, getting older, losing financial resources can no longer be the only guide to our decision making. Our message must be one of reconciliation, hope and promise. Remember the story in John's Gospel? Some Greeks come to Philip and request, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." It is reflective of creation's longing for spiritual connection and truth. Today is no different; people are seeking truth and spiritual connection and we through the grace of Jesus have a true message that is life changing. When our narrative is grounded in the Gospel of Jesus, people experience reconciliation, hope and promise. How will we accomplish changing the narrative? Together! We must learn not to be driven by fear, but to work together, sharing honestly our hopes and needs with one another. We cannot work independently of one another, Synod and Congregational Leadership must work in tandem to encourage and support one another the same narrative of a life in Jesus.

Describe your leadership style.

Compassionate leadership reflected in active listening and the courage to act without fear of failure. Encourager and coach of others to lead fully to where God is calling. Vision driven to achieve results that reflect openness to where the Holy Spirit is leading. Lastly, a priority to strengthening relationships and building new ones.

Official Biographical Information Form
Nominee for Bishop of the South Carolina Synod - 2026 Election

Please return this completed form via email to charlene@scsynod.com (if not attending assembly in person) - OR Submit to Secretary, Rev. Ozzie Herlong (if in person) by 9:45 am, Friday, June 12, 2026

The completed forms of the top seven nominees (plus ties) will be distributed to the assembly before the third ballot.

Name: Wade Roof

Current Position: Senior Pastor of Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church

Congregation Membership: Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church City: West Columbia, SC

Date and Year of Birth: [REDACTED] (Redacted before distribution to Assembly)

Age Range (please circle): Under 30 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and over

Date and Year of Ordination: Oct. 28, 2009

Previous Positions:

- Senior Pastor - Mt. Tabor Lutheran Church, West Columbia 2014-Present
- Solo Pastor - Resurrection and St. Matthews Lutheran Churches, Cameron 2009-2014
- Assistant High School Baseball Coach - River Bluff High School -2022 - Present
- Director of Sales and Logistics - Central Supply Co. 2004-2009

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

- Gardner Webb School of Divinity Doctorate Studies in Congregational Leadership
- Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary MDiv
- Newberry College BA

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

- Dean of the Saxe Gotha Conference of SC Synod
- Member of the SC Synod Nominating Committee
- Member of SC Synod Council
- Member of the Lutheran Southern Seminary Alumni Board
- Member of the SC Synod Racial Reconciliation Task Force

(turn over)

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

- Board Member of the West Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Chairman of the Board of the Good Samaritan Medical Clinic
- Varsity Baseball Coach at River Bluff High School
- Member of Lexington School District 2 Student outreach
- Active Participant/Speaker for Fellowship of Christian Athletes

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

My strongest gifts are my ability to equip, resource, empower, and encourage God's people to live up to their callings in Christ. I am a person that values and embodies trust, respect, and deep relationships that witness to Christ in our midst. I am a Coach at heart, and love being in the process of growing, learning, and practicing my faith. I am disciplined in my approach to life, and I love to compete in every thing I do. I think in long term strategic ways about kingdom growth. I think in creative ways to address problems around me, and I am a team first leader who leads with and through communication and collaboration with others. Building relationships and being present is most important for me.

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

The Biggest Challenge facing the SC Synod right now is the division of God's people politically, socially, and spiritually. We have forgotten that it is Christ alone that writes us through His love for us shown on the cross. That division comes from outside forces, Rogue denominations, and from within our own congregations. I believe a ministry of presence, solidarity, and trust from our Bishop is how we offer the pastoral support our Rostered leaders, Congregational leaders, and individual Lutherans need to face any challenge ahead. Our congregations and the pews of our churches, are big enough to hold Red and Blue, Conservative and liberal, Men and Women, for the heart of Christ is big enough to hold us all together and redeem, even our biggest differences. We are One in Christ and One in God's Mission.

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

My Ministry is based in Eph 4:12, "to equip the saints for the work of Ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." As a pastor, Baseball Coach, husband, Father, and Child of God, My leadership has always looked like empowering people to live out their callings to the best of their ability, and to move our organizations forward into the future. Almost 2 decades of Congregational Ministry has taught me that deep, trusting relationships are the best way to lead and point to Christ in all that we do. I am a disciplined and collaborative leader. I am a Strategic Competitor in how I approach life, I am creative in how I solve problems and I never shy away from hard issues. As Bishop I will walk with you, be present and available in and to your congregations, and I will work hard to earn and keep your trust through the relationships we build.

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Name: David Wesley Coffman

Current Position: Campus Pastor, Newberry College, Newberry, SC, 2021 – current

Congregation Membership: Pilgrim Lutheran Church **City:** Lexington,

Date and Year of Birth: [REDACTED] (Redacted before distribution to Assembly)

Age Range (please circle): Under 30 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and over

Date and Year of Ordination: November 10, 2001

Previous Positions:

- Hospice Bereavement Coordinator, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator, Lead Volunteer Coordinator, Lead Bereavement Coordinator, Director, Hospice House Chaplain, Community Chaplain, Patient Care Coordinator – Agape Hospice, Agape Care, LTC – 2012 –2021.
- Clinical Pastoral Education Resident, Prisma Richland/Baptist, 2011-2012.
- Pastor, St. Johns, Walhalla 2001-2011.

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

- Doctor of Ministry, Christian Leadership and Community Witness, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, (anticipated) 2027
- Master of Divinity, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS), 2001
- Bachelor of Art, Newberry College, 1997

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

- SC Synod Candidacy – 2022 – curr.
- Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary Worship Table Chair – 2024-25.
- LTSS Alumni Board – 2023 – curr., Chair – '25-curr.
- South Carolina Lutheran Retreat Centers, Board 2024 – curr., Chair – '24, previously served on and off the Board and as chair for many years since 2002
- Stated Supply and Holy Closure for Resurrection Lutheran Church, Columbia, 2017-2018

(turn over)

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

---Supply preacher in SC and neighboring states - (2011 - curr.)

---Youth Ministry Volunteer - Camp Hugg, Sr. High, Middle School Retreats (2012-curr.)

---Newberry College Search Committees: VP of Belonging (2022), VP Student Affairs (2023), VP Academic Affairs (2025).

---Coordinator of Wolves Pantry, its volunteers, student staff, grant applications, community advocate, Host to Carolinas Colleges Food Insecurity Conference at Newberry College 2022 - curr.

---Volunteer, Coach, Pageant Dad, Judge - Miss Newberry Board, Miss South Carolina Org., Miss South Carolina Volunteer Org. - 2020 - curr

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

As a child of this synod, formed by its congregations, youth ministries, retreats and institutions, I carry a deep love for our Lutheran identity and mission in South Carolina and beyond. Experienced in leadership development, campus ministry, community engagement, and walking alongside people in moments of grief, hope, and discernment, I offer a pastoral heart asking where is God in the midst of any given moment and listen effectively, so I can offer genuine care to all whom I meet; people, small groups, congregations, where they are in life. The greatest Holy Spirit given gift is being a non-anxious presence with others. I value collegial leadership and believe the church is strongest when we work together, collaborate and listen to build relationships across our differences. If we are truly heaven-bound people, then we are called to practice grace, humility, and life together with all people, even with those with who are different.

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

The greatest challenge facing the SC Synod in the next six years is whether we and our congregations will move toward living fully into God's mission in the world. Many congregations and leaders are weary and anxious about survival. Our worship communities are doing holy work on Sunday, but if we are not also present with the hurting, hungry, lonely, broken, and forgotten throughout the week, we risk becoming irrelevant to the communities around us. We must encourage pastors, deacons, and lay leaders while fostering collaboration among all congregations and institutional ministries as we strengthen our community witness to those who need to hear God's amazing grace. Opening church doors is not enough; we must give people a reason to enter through the baptismal promises of service, justice, grace, and belonging. By saying, "yes, with the help of God," we will also confront racism, Christian nationalism, homophobia, division and injustice wherever they hinder the Gospel and the building of authentic community.

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

My leadership style is deeply pastoral, collaborative, and grounded in the belief that the church is called into faithful participation in God's mission in the world. I strive to lead as a non-anxious presence during times of uncertainty and change, meeting people where they are in life and in their spiritual journeys with grace, humility, and compassion. I value collegial leadership and believe the church is strongest when pastors, deacons, and lay leaders work together across differences while building authentic relationships rooted in trust and mutual respect. My leadership is shaped by a strong Lutheran identity, a commitment to community engagement, and a willingness to lean into and address difficult realities facing the church; opportunities and the decline, division, racism, homophobia, and Christian nationalism. At the same time, I seek to lead with resurrection hope, encouraging congregations to rediscover purpose through God's grace, service to the communities around us, justice and peace ministries, and meaningful witness to the saving grace of God in the communities around us.

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Name: *Bobby Morris*

Current Position: *Pastor, St. Matthews Lutheran Church*
Adjunct Faculty, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary

Congregation Membership: *St. Matthews Lutheran Church* City: *Pomaria*

Date and Year of Birth: [REDACTED] (Redacted before distribution to Assembly)

Age Range (please circle): Under 30 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and over

Date and Year of Ordination: *Oct 11, 2015*

Previous Positions:

Pastor, Mt. Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Prosperity

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

Doctoral study, Vanderbilt University (Ph.D. ABD) 2001-2006
Master of Sacred Theology - Old Testament concentration, LTSS, 2001
Master of Arts in Religion - LTSS, 1999
Bachelor of Arts - Presbyterian College, 1997

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

Synod Assemblies
Advised Ministers Convocations
Synod Council
Bishop's Mutual Ministry Committee
Board - Restoration Chapel, Greenwood
(turn over)

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

Board - Pilgrims of Ithilien
Board, Pastoral Advisory, CPE Program, Self Regional Hospital,
Member, VP, President, Mid Carolina Ministerial Association ^{Greenwood}

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

Deep grounding in our Lutheran beliefs - especially the paramount nature of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and the importance of education in the church.

Ability to authentically relate to people in many settings and contexts - listen, and offer understanding, yet direct and ^{honest} feedback.

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

Fear - address by facilitating deeper connections between all congregations and expressions of the church to show that the grace of God which calls and unites us is far stronger than anything that would cause fear.

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

A listener who is open to all perspectives, engages in conversation and reflection, and then encourages and equips others to lead.

Biographical Information Form
SC Synod, ELCA
2026 Bishop Election

1. Name: Patti Sue Burton-Pye
2. Current Position: Pastor
3. Congregation Membership: Providence Lutheran Church
4. Date and Year of Birth: [REDACTED]
 - a. Age Range: under 30 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and over
5. Date and Year of Ordination: June 22, 2008
6. Previous Positions:
 - 1981 – 2000, Marsh & McLennan Companies, Sr. Vice President
 - 2000 - 2003, Willis Inc., Sr. Vice President
 - 2004 – 2005, Pisgah Lutheran Church, Children's Ministry Coordinator
 - 2007 -- St. Peter's Catholic School, Substitute Teacher
7. Education and Earned Degrees (with institutions and years, most recent first)
 - 2007 – Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC – Master of Divinity Degree
 - 1980 – Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, GA – Bachelor of Arts Degree, General Studies, cum laude
 - 1977 – Sequoyah High School, Doraville, GA --Diploma
8. List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod
 - Congregational Vitality Network (2015 – Present) / American Missions / Planting & Sustaining Congregations (2010 – 2015)
 - SC Synod Audit Committee (2009-2015, 2021 - Present)
 - Synod Council (2019 – 2021)
 - Revisioning / Restructure / Implementation Committee (2009 – 2015)
 - Synod Assembly Conduct of Elections (2012, 2013, 2014)
9. List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod
 - Lexington Middle School Advisor Board (2010 – 2018) / Lakeside Middle School Counselor Advisory Board (2020 – Present)
 - LaVie Pregnancy Care Center Board of Directors (2017 – Present)
 - SC Via de Cristo Spiritual Director and Secretariat (2011 – 2014, 2017, 2019 – 2025)
 - SC Christian Action Council Board (2019 – 2021)
 - Mission Lexington Board of Directors (2011 – 2019)
10. What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)
 - **Faith** Rooted in Jesus Christ, I lead from trust in God's faithful provision. Every decision flows from prayer, Scripture, and the Holy Spirit's guidance.
 - **Pastoral Care** Compassionate support for pastors, deacons, congregations, and leaders will build healthy Christ-centered relationships across the Synod.

- **Leadership** Twenty-three years of executive leadership has taught me the importance of clear vision, equipping others, and making decisive yet faithful, collaborative decisions.
- **Stewardship** “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Trusting God’s provision is essential to advancing our mission and securing the Synod’s future.
- **Evangelism** Bold, joyful witness to the Gospel, God’s love, and justice -- keeping Jesus central enables the Synod to faithfully represent our congregations to the ELCA.
- **Knowledge** I acknowledge what I don’t know and stay informed and teachable, leading by nurturing discipleship and spiritual formation.
- **Wisdom** Grounded in prayer, the Holy Spirit, and Scripture, will guide us as we discern cultural shifts, foster transformation and speak with transparency and courage.

11. What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

The principal challenge facing our Synod is to move from merely surviving to boldly thriving. This cannot occur by strategy alone, but requires genuine revival rooted in Jesus Christ.

Revival! For two years, the ELCA has called synods and congregations to pursue spiritual revival. That call demands our wholehearted response. Gen Z and Millennials are searching for truth, authentic community, and purpose. We are called to meet them where they are with the genuine welcome and love of Christ, while remaining truthful about sin and the Gospel’s call to repentance. In this balance we discover the freedom of forgiveness.

Amid declining membership and economic uncertainty, we must be courageous by developing new strategies for sharing the Gospel and being the Church in our time. We need congregations that are visionary, strategic, and deeply faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must all center our life and mission on Jesus and the call to everyday discipleship.

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

My leadership style is collaborative, adaptive and Spirit-led. I emphasize shared decision-making, relational empowerment, and collaborative discernment, while remaining willing to exercise decisive leadership when needed. My leadership approach aims to cultivate healthy relationships, empower others, and discern the best path forward together, while always trusting the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

My style is grounded in:

- Deep faith and a strong commitment to our Lutheran identity, while embracing new opportunities
- Building trusting relationships while guiding necessary change
- Clear pastoral and strategic direction that empowers staff to advance the Synod’s mission and vision
- Fostering transparency and trust through consistent, effective communication
- Bringing a calming, hopeful presence amid conflict, crisis, or transition
- Actively seeking feedback and reflecting on experience
- Inspiring hope, trust, and faithful action

I will seek first to understand, recognizing I do not have every answer. My goal is to help the people of God listen deeply, discern wisely, and move forward together with faith, courage, and grace.

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Name: *Christopher Heauner*

Current Position: *Lutheran Homes of SC Foundation*

Congregation Membership: *University*

City: *Weldon*

Date and Year of Birth: [REDACTED] (Redacted before distribution to Assembly)

Age Range (please circle): Under 30 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and over

Date and Year of Ordination:

MAY 30, 1983

Previous Positions:

Pastor - Bethel Salisbury NC
Lutheran School of Theology - Dean of Students
Good Shepherd Houghton MI
Campus Pastor - Clemson University

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

Luth School of Theology at Chicago 1983
North Carolina State University 1979

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

National Campus Ministry Reg 9 Facilitator
Consultation on Theological Education
Synod Social Action Team
Global Missions Synod Chair

(turn over)

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

Project Leader- 31 Habitat Houses
Refugee Support Task Force
Clemson ML King Observance

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

Commitment to the Church As a shared
ministry of each leader + congregation

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

Helping each congregation understand why
they need to be active in synod affairs

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

I talk - too much - but to everyone - I must
have someone organize stuff - my role is the
relationship building

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Name: Rev. Nathan Gragg

Current Position: Chief Development Officer, NovusWay Ministries

Congregation Membership: Our Saviour City: West Columbia

Date and Year of Birth: [REDACTED] (Redacted before distribution to Assembly)

Age Range (please circle): Under 30 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 and over

Date and Year of Ordination: July 28, 2002

Previous Positions:

Pastor, Zion Lutheran Church, Lexington, SC
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Greenwood, SC
Associate Pastor, First Lutheran Church, Norfolk, VA
Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church, Weirton, WV

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

Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, 2002
Master of Divinity

Montreat College (Montreat, NC), 1998
Bachelor of Arts in American Studies

List up to five (5) current or past synod or churchwide activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

Past Dean of the Saxe Gotna Conference
Gamecock Lutheran Campus Ministry Board
SC Synod Assembly Discipleship Experiences Team (2016, 2020)
Leadership for Faithful Innovation Cohort

(turn over)

List up to five (5) current or past community-related activities that would inform your service as bishop of this synod.

Board member & Treasurer, Village Square Theatre
(community theatre) Lexington, SC

Cub Scout Den Leader

Volunteer soccer coach - YMCA & Greenwood High School

Graceworks theme song composer (2021-2026) 🎵

What gifts would you bring to the office of bishop of this synod? (1,000 characters maximum)

Preaching and story telling about the work of God
and the movement of the Spirit in our ministries
Collaboration and connections throughout the Synod
Administration and planning

Experience in many congregational settings

Working with teams and equipping others for ministry

What do you see as the principal challenge to this synod in the next six (6) years, and how would you address it? (1,000 characters maximum)

What does it mean to be church in 2026 and beyond?
How can we join the work of God in this moment?
Who are we inviting to know Jesus and journey with us?
There are lots of big questions and I look forward to
faithfully discerning God's answers with all of you.

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

I am patient. I'm a thinker and a planner.

I like to collaborate and wonder creatively about
what we might do together in ministry.

I enjoy making connections and equipping the
saints for ministry.

I trust leaders to lead.

I believe in the value and power of being present,
knowing God is at work in us always!