

MINUTES
Of the 124th MEETING
Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
February 21, 2013
St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Audubon, PA

The Reverend William Mueller, Pastor, St. Andrew, Audubon, welcomed Synod Council members and the Reverend Ellen Meissgeier, Dean, Lower Montgomery Conference, led devotions.

Vice President Patricia Robinson called to order the One Hundred Twenty-fourth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 123rd meeting as presented.

SETTING OF THE AGENDA

Vice President Robinson presented the agenda for the 124th meeting.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Mr. Fred Reniger, chair, Personnel Committee, reviewed the revisions of the synod document *Personnel Policy Guidelines* as requested by the Synod Council at its meeting on December 6, 2012. Because he requested revisions at specific sections of the document, Mr. Rodman Rothermel indicated that he found the committee's proposed revisions satisfactory.

Mr. Rothermel moved the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.01 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council approves the document *Personnel Policy Guidelines* as updated by the Personnel Committee and revised by the Synod Council as presented on February 21, 2013.

BISHOP'S REPORT

ELCA Bishops' Academy

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, reported that she attended the Academy for ELCA Bishops, an annual continuing education opportunity, January 2-8, 2013, in San Juan, PR. This year's discussions and experiences revolved around Latino culture and theology as it affects the ELCA's mission.

Epic Mortgage vs. Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Bishop Burkat reported that the synod's attorney, Mr. John Gordon, and the Epic Mortgage Company's attorney, Mr. Michael Coughlin, settled the lawsuit relating to Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), out of court on January 25, 2013. In a letter to the Executive Committee, the Synod Council, the Deans, the Synod Staff, and rostered leaders, she summarized the details of the settlement:

The Epic claim for \$325,000 was increased to \$380,000 as Epic attached their legal fees, interest and penalties. The settlement included several parties: SEPA Synod, Epic Mortgage Company, the title company, and the two co-signers of the original mortgage for \$275,000.

In exchange for dropping the suit, the Synod will turn over the balance in the former Redeemer's checking account when the city court froze the account due to ongoing litigation. This amount, totaling \$26,000, has been held in escrow for four years and represents the balance of the loan proceeds that Redeemer borrowed. We also agreed to a payment of \$75,000, to be paid in full within one year. When this is fully paid, there will be no encumbrance on the East Falls church building or the adjoining school building.

The other parties also agreed to settle with payments to the mortgage company. The title company involved in the church building title transfer will pay \$94,000. The mortgage company has settled its claims against one of the co-signers for \$55,000. That claim is related to the personal guarantee that this person signed at the closing. At this time, the mortgage company is still in negotiations with the other co-signer, the details of which cannot be discussed here.

The Synod now owns the former Redeemer property with a lien of \$75,000 which will be removed upon payment of that sum by the Synod.

Bishop Burkat thanked the "Redeemer Trustees," the Reverends Raymond Miller and Lee Miller, Ms. Tracey Beasley, and Mr. Lawrence House; Assistant to the Bishop, the Reverend Patricia Davenport; and the synod's attorney, Mr. John Gordon, "for their tireless and faithful work on this very stressful issue." (Pastor Lee Miller is now serving a congregation in upstate New York.) The trustees have served since June 2007.

Christian Churches Together (CCT)

Bishop Burkat reported that she travelled to Austin, TX, January 29-February 1, 2013, for the annual meeting of Christian Churches Together (CCT), where she serves on the steering committee. The Christian leaders at the meeting, representing the breadth of Christian church bodies in the U.S., issued a strong and urgent call for fundamental immigration reform.

Journey for Renewal

Bishop Burkat reported that she travelled to Carefree, AZ, February 9-13, 2013, for a wellness retreat called *Journey for Renewal*, sponsored by Portico Benefit Services, and bringing together 15 ELCA bishops. "Here I did indeed experience a renewal of my call and my vocation through prayer, worship, healing, meditation, learning, discussion, and encounter with the Word and our Lord in preparation for the Lenten season," she noted.

Closing of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit

Bishop Burkat reported that, on February 3, 2013, Holy Spirit, Philadelphia, voted to dissolve. Its final worship service is scheduled for February 24, 2013. She presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.02 Whereas the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, has served as a Christian congregation in this synod since 1939, proclaiming the Gospel, nurturing the faith of thousands of people, and reaching out in love to its neighborhood; and

Whereas the membership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit has determined that it is not possible to continue to function as a viable Christian congregation in an appropriate and effective manner, leading to the decision on February 3, 2013, that the congregation shall cease operations and disband on February 24, 2013;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Synod Council gives thanks to Almighty God for the faithful ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Philadelphia, for the past 74 years, commends its leaders and people, including its most recent pastor, the Reverend Sandra Brown, for their commitment and guidance, and encourages the members of Holy Spirit to seek new homes within the many Lutheran congregations of Philadelphia county.

Preaching with Power

Bishop Burkat encouraged Synod Council members to attend the various *Preaching with Power* events, offered by the Urban Theological Institute of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, scheduled for March 10-24, 2013.

Conference of Bishops Extension Request

Bishop Burkat presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council requests that the Reverend Bruce Thorsen be granted his first two-year extension of *on leave from call* status from the ELCA Conference of Bishops effective June 8, 2013.

Action on the Roster

Calls to Interim Ministry

Bishop Burkat presented the following resolutions, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.04 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Rev. Dr. Laurie J. Andersen to interim ministry as a part-time interim ministry at Saints United Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, PA, starting January 1, 2013, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Andersen resigns this call, whichever comes first.

RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Rev. Paul Richard Beck to interim ministry at St. John Lutheran Church, Philadelphia (Mayfair), PA, starting February 5, 2013, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Beck resigns this call, whichever comes first.

RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Rev. Marcia G. Bell to interim ministry at St. John Lutheran Church, Centre Square, PA, starting February 17, 2013, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Bell resigns this call, whichever comes first.

RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Rev. Dr. L. George Detweiler to interim ministry at University Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, Philadelphia, PA, starting March 1, 2013, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Detweiler resigns this call, whichever comes first.

Retirement

Bishop Burkat presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to the Reverend Sara Hale, effective December 1, 2012.

On Leave from Call Requests

Bishop Burkat presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to the Reverends David Percy, 1st year, effective March 1, 2013, and John Carlson, 2nd year, effective March 1, 2013.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Announcing that she has declined nomination for another term as Vice President of this synod, Vice President Robinson expressed thanks for the opportunity to serve as Vice President for three terms. She described her time as Vice President to be “one of my most rewarding experiences in my life”

Bishop Burkat asked Synod Council members to reserve the date of May 10, 2013, for a celebration of Ms. Robinson's service as Vice President.

Vice President Robinson reviewed the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on February 7, 2013.

Secretary Miller presented the following resolution, resulting from a request by the synod staff to define the term “significant numbers” as it relates to granting “congregations with significant numbers of baptized persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English ... an additional lay voting member (total three) plus one youth/young adult voting member” at the Synod Assembly:

S. C. 13.02.07 Whereas the constitution of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod at +S6.04. grants “this synod” authority to “establish processes that will enable it to reach a minimum goal that 10% of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards, or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English,” and

Whereas it has been a long-established policy of this synod to grant “congregations with significant numbers of baptized persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English ... an additional lay voting member (total three) plus one youth/young adult voting member” at the Synod Assembly,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council defines “significant numbers” to mean that “at least 20 percent of a congregation’s baptized membership shall be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English as defined by the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* at 5.01.C00;” and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council requires that “the additional lay voting member” shall be a “person of color and/or whose primary language is other than English as defined by the *Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* at 5.01.C00.”

Secretary Miller reported that “at least 20 percent” is used by the ELCA’s *Ethnic Specific and Multicultural Ministries* to identify a congregation as an “ethnic specific ministry.” According to information supplied by that ELCA office, 28 of this synod’s congregations are at least 20% “persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English.”

The Synod Council approved the resolution.

SECRETARY’S REPORT

Secretary Miller reported that, if the 2013 Synod Assembly approves the proposed amendment of bylaw **S9.08.01.b.**, nomination for Synod Council conference representatives would be permitted from the floor at the 2013 Synod Assembly.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Report of the Treasurer

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, reviewed a summary of 2012 financial results:

- Partnership Support was below budget by \$157,903.
- *For All the Saints* Appeal was below budget by \$53,126.
- Income from Unrestricted Funds was below budget by \$247,826.
- Expenses below budget by \$136,582.
- Total unrestricted income was \$2,190,693; total unrestricted expenses were \$2,225,701, leaving the result of expenses exceeding income by \$35,008.
- Temporarily restricted results showed income over expenses by \$92,437. This helps fund our mission priorities.
- Mission results showed expenses over income by \$159,181.
- Permanently restricted results showed income over expenses by \$43,063.
- Our final deficit was \$58,689.

She also reviewed the 2013 revised budget:

- Increased Partnership Support by \$8,000 to \$2,100,000.
- Increased *For All the Saints* Appeal by \$68,000 to \$110,000.
- Other increases, such as reimbursements, investment income, and unrestricted bequests were \$33,000, for a total unrestricted income of \$2,299,695.
- Proportionate share decreased from 53.5% to 53%; however, still an increase if we meet our goal of \$2,100,000. The difference of \$35,000 is due to an overpayment in 2011-12.
- Temporarily restricted assumes increases in Assembly and Convocation registrations, as well as a major increase in Malaria donations and Youth expenses.
- Mission shows we continue to fund mission congregations and ministries at about \$141,000 per year.
- The permanently restricted shows a slight decrease due to expenses of stewardship and interim ministry being funded.

She then outlined recommendations for the 2014 proposed budget:

- Proposing to decrease proportionate share from 53% to 50%. This will decrease our unrestricted expenses by \$63,000. From this, we will continue to fund mission expenses, which are expected to be \$150,000 of expenses over revenue.
- Give the staff a salary increase. The bishop and the treasurer will be evaluating the distribution in the coming month. The staff has not had a salary increase in 5 years.
- Transfer \$25,000 back into the *Fund for Mission*.

Bishop Burkat reported that, in order to reduce the percentage of ELCA Partnership Support, the synod must schedule a consultation with a representative of the churchwide organization.

Synod Council members spent significant time in discussion of the ramifications of the proposed 2014 budget, particularly in regard to a reduction of the percentage for Partnership Support, also identified by the term “Proportionate Share.”

Report of the Finance Committee

The Reverend Christopher Weidner, Chair, presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.07 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council recommends the proposed 2014 mission budget, with expenditures of \$2,234,862.87 and the synod’s Proportionate Share to the ELCA being set at 50 percent, for presentation to and approval by the 2013 Synod Assembly.

Ms. Neff reported that the Finance Committee is reviewing the synod’s lease for office space with Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Report of the Audit Committee

Mr. Rothermel, Chair, reported that the accounting firm Tait/Weller, Philadelphia, has been selected to conduct the 2012 financial audit.

Synod Council members recessed for dinner. Pr. Mueller offered prayer.

SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Nominating

Pastor Sandra Brown, Chair, reported that the Nominating Committee met over dinner, at which time the committee reviewed the list of nominees for election at the 2013 Synod Assembly and made plans to seek additional nominees.

Administration

The Reverend Henrik Sonntag, Chair, presented the proposed program for the 2013 Synod Assembly and moved the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

SC 13.02.08 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council approves the *Proposed Program for the Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Assembly, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, May 3-4, 2013, as presented.*

Constitution

The Reverend Paul Beck, Chair, presented the following resolutions, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 13.02.09 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council grants full approval to the constitution of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Coopersburg (Pleasant Valley).

Announcements

Bishop Burkat requested prayers of healing for the Reverends Carol Ficken, Timothy Taylor, and Harold Evans, and Mr. Richard Reimet.

The Synod Council adjourned at 7:20 p.m. Bishop Burkat offered prayer.

The 125th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is scheduled for Thursday, April 11, 2013, 4:00 p.m., Calvary, West Chester.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller
Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod