

MINUTES
Of the 117th MEETING
Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
September 15, 2011
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ardmore, PA

Ms. Patricia Robinson, Vice President, called to order the One Hundred Seventeenth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:15 p.m.

The Reverend Harry McDowell, Pastor, St. Paul, Ardmore, welcomed Synod Council members and led devotions.

SOCIAL MINISTRY REPORT

Ms. Joan Myers, Chief Operating Officer, Liberty Lutheran Services, Ambler, outlined the history of the Mary J. Drexel Home, now located in Bala Cynwyd, an affiliated agency of Liberty Lutheran Services, noting that the home was founded in 1878 by Mr. John D. Lankenau, a Philadelphia philanthropist, in memory of his wife Mary J. Drexel. The home originally served older German immigrants in need of housing and care.

She added that the Mary J. Drexel Home joined Liberty Lutheran Services in 2008. Since that time the home has temporarily suspended activities. Meanwhile Liberty is seeking to revive the Mary J. Drexel Home into a state-of-the-art facility for meeting the needs of today's older adults. Ground has been broken and architectural plans have been developed for expanding the facility. Construction is scheduled to begin in the first half of 2012. The Mary J. Drexel Home plans to make use of a newer model for assisted living, creating a more open and less institutional environment and making possible greater interaction among staff and residents.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 116th meeting.

SETTING OF THE AGENDA

Vice President Robinson presented the agenda for the 117th meeting.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Return from Sabbatical – Looking Forward

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, expressed her deepest thanks to the Synod Council for their support in providing her with a three-month sabbatical from June through August of this year. “It was truly a priceless gift,” she noted. “I have been working since I was fourteen years old and have never before had extended time for myself. This sabbatical was renewing for me physically, mentally and spiritually.” She reported that she travelled to Europe in June, visited family and friends in July, and attended the Churchwide Assembly and spent time discerning her call as bishop in August. Accordingly, she announced to the Synod Council, “I have decided to make myself available for a second-term as bishop.” She then thanked synod staff members for providing leadership in the synod office during her absence.

Bishop Burkat requested feedback from Synod Council members regarding the operation of the synod office during her sabbatical. Ms. Jill Meuser remarked that it was encouraging to know that the work of the synod was able to take place in the bishop’s absence. The Reverend Patricia Davenport, Assistant to the Bishop, expressed thanks to Bishop Burkat for the systems that she had put in place before she left that enabled the synod to operate efficiently.

Welcome to Yvonne Curtis

Bishop Burkat introduced and welcomed Ms. Yvonne Curtis as the new interim Director of Operations. Ms. Curtis began her duties on September 6, 2011.

2011 Churchwide Assembly

Bishop Burkat described the Churchwide Assembly, which took place August 15-19, 2011, in Orlando, Florida, as “the most joyful, hopeful and optimistic Assembly I have seen in a decade.” She noted the assembly approved the following: (1) the Malaria Campaign, (2) the social statement on genetics, and (3) the LIFT recommendations.

New Korean Mission

At Bishop Burkat’s request, Pastor Davenport said that she is very excited about a new mission opportunity in the North Wales area. St. Peter, North Wales, has voted to host and help to launch a Korean ministry in Montgomery County under the direction of the Reverend Jonathan Shin, a mission developer. The Korean ministry would be initially designated as a “synodically authorized worshipping community.”

Fall Conference Gatherings

Bishop Burkat encouraged Synod Council members to attend one of the Fall Conference Gatherings: October 16, St. Luke, Devon; October 30, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia; and November 6, Trinity, Lansdale. All gatherings are from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

Bishop's Convocation

Bishop Burkat reported that the theme for this year's Bishop's Convocation, planned for November 9-11, 2011, at the Willow Valley DoubleTree Resort, Lancaster, is "From Muhlenberg to Tomorrow." Speakers are the Reverend Dr. Karl Krueger and the Reverend Dr. Peter Steinke.

Action on the Roster

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

S. C. 11.09.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to the Reverends Albert I. Douglass, effective September 25, 2011, and Diana M. Vidlak, effective October 1, 2011.

S. C. 11.09.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council removes from the roster of ordained ministers the Reverends Diedone Diela Panzo, effective August 18, 2011, and J. Patrick Seyler, effective August 22, 2011.

S. C. 11.09.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to the Reverend Paul Beck, 2nd year, effective November 30, 2011; the Reverend Priscila Curet, 5th year, requesting Conference of Bishops approval, effective October 2011; Ms. Pat Polilli, AIM, 1st year, effective September 15, 2011; and Mr. Bruce Saylor, AIM, 1st year, effective June 5, 2011.

S. C. 11.09.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *special* calls to the Reverend Dr. John Berntsen, Interim Chaplain, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA, effective October 1 to December 31, 2011; and the Reverend N. Jackson Haas, Bridge Pastor, Family of God, Buckingham, effective August 1, 2011.

S. C. 11.09.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants a *non-stipendiary* call to the Reverend Lyzette Rios Sanchez, Nueva Creacion, Philadelphia, effective October 1, 2011.

Additional Calls

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

S. C. 11.09.06 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Jonathan Shin as the Mission Developer of the new Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community, Philadelphia Korean Ministry, hosted by St. Peter, North Wales, PA, starting October 1, 2011, and extending until September 30, 2012.

S. C. 11.09.07 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council regularizes the call of the Reverend Joseph Varsanyi as Director of Pastoral Care at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Methodist Division, Philadelphia, PA, following the recent successful completion of his APC (Association of Professional Chaplains) Certification, effective October 1, 2011

Calls to Interim Ministry

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

S. C. 11.09.08 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Michael G. Merkel to interim ministry at Temple Lutheran Church, Havertown, PA, starting September 26, 2011, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Merkel resigns this call, whichever comes first.

RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Marcia G. Bell to interim ministry at St. John Lutheran Church, Hatboro, PA, starting August 1, 2011, 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 Reverend Kristine A. Peterson to interim ministry at Grace Lutheran Church, Drexel Hill, PA, starting August 15, 2011, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Peterson resigns this call, whichever comes first.

RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend James H. Wolford to interim ministry at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Chester Springs, PA, starting October 24, 2011, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Wolford resigns this call, whichever comes first.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Robinson reviewed the responsibilities of the various Synod Council committees and distributed a list of committee assignments. Ms. Kimerly Hinkelman reiterated her concern that the Synod Council establish a personnel committee.

The Synod Council recessed for dinner. Pastor McDowell offered prayer. Synod Council committees met over dinner.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Election of a Replacement Churchwide Assembly Voting Member

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, reported that, by means of an email vote in June of this year, the Synod Council elected Mr. Jean Casimir as a voting member of the 2011 Churchwide Assembly from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, replacing Mr. Christian Hicks. Eleven voted yes and no one voted no.

Amendment of the 2011 Synod Assembly Minutes

At the request of the Reverend William Vanderslice, St. Paul, Red Hill, Secretary Miller presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 11.09.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council amends the minutes of the 2011 Synod Assembly by adding the following sentence to the section *Welcome and Introductions* on page 2:

“Bishop Burkat thanked St. Paul, Red Hill, for giving, in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the chalices, flagons, bread baskets, and elements used at the Service of Holy Communion.”

TREASURER'S AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, explained that she is taking a different approach in regard to how the synod's finances are reported. As such, at future meetings, she would report on the synod's financial statements, including the budget and balance sheets, and that the Chair of the Finance Committee would report on items and concerns from that committee.

Ms. Neff then proceeded to report that she has been in the process of trying “to get a handle on what kind of accounts the synod has.” She reviewed various lines on the balance sheet and the “income and expense, budget vs. actual” sheet. She noted that reconciling accounts has been a major effort.

The Reverend Christopher Weidner, Chair, Finance Committee, reviewed the items discussed at the committee's meeting on September 1, 2011. The committee recommends that the Synod Council establish an Audit Committee and a Stewardship (Financial Support) Committee. Even though there are constitutional provisions for these two committees, these committees do not currently operate.

SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Because Synod Council committees are newly forming, there were no reports from the **Administration, Congregations/Stewardship, Nominating, Synod Constitution, and Audit** committees.

COMPANION SYNOD REPORT

Bishop Burkat reported that Ms. Joanne Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Vision and Events, is currently visiting the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania with a group from this synod.

OLD BUSINESS

Old Zion, Philadelphia

Synod Council members engaged in a confidential discussion regarding the situation at Old Zion, Philadelphia. At issue is (1) Old Zion's action to call a pastor not on the roster of the ELCA and (2) Old Zion's stated intention to be duly rostered by both the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Conference and Ministerium. The Synod Council postponed any further discussion and possible action until early in the agenda of its meeting on December 8, 2011.

NEW BUSINESS

Bear Creek Camp Board Election

The Synod Council elected Ms. Jane Jorgensen, Souderton, PA, and Ms. Jill Voicheck, Hatfield, PA, to serve as members of the Bear Creek Camp Board for terms ending 2014.

The Synod Council adjourned at 8:05 p.m. Bishop Burkat offered prayer.

The 118th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is scheduled for Thursday, December 8, 2011, 4:00 p.m., at St. Michael's Lutheran Church (Germantown), Philadelphia.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller
Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod