

MINUTES
Of the 119th MEETING
Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
February 23, 2012
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Glenside, PA

Ms. Patricia Robinson, Vice President, called to order the One Hundred Nineteenth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:02 p.m.

The Reverend Henrik Sonntag, Pastor, St. Paul, Glenside, welcomed Synod Council members and the Reverend Ellen Meissgeier, Dean, Lower Montgomery Conference, led devotions.

PRESENTATION

By means of a power point presentation, Mr. Robert Fisher provided an overview of his work as the Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation and Communication. In support of the synod's purpose statement, he identified his work as "an equipping ministry," in which he strives to keep leaders informed, tell stories, and provide resources. In addition to his public activities, which include responsibility for SEPANews, the synod's electronic newsletter; the MinistryLink website; and program events, he is involved with messaging for synod initiatives, media relations/crisis management, congregational consultation, IT management, and database management.

He noted the three means by which the synod seeks to communicate with its constituents: direct mail, email, and Facebook. He reported that, since February 24, 2011, the synod has sent 130,000 emails, of which 52,000, or 40%, have been opened, well above the industry average of 17.5%. He also reported that the synod's website had 30,000 visits within the past year.

Under development are the "God is doing something new" website and a mobile website.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 118th meeting as presented.

SETTING OF THE AGENDA

Vice President Robinson presented the agenda for the 119th meeting.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Fire/Flood

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, reported that, on January 27, 2012, a fire in the apartment above her office set off the sprinkler system in the offices of the synod staff, soaking the entire area. She acknowledged the “resilience and adaptability” of the synod staff during their time of displacement, noting that the synod’s work continued in one way or another for the next two weeks, and thanked the staff for “their hard work, excellent attitude, and good humor.”

Expansion of Leadership Responsibilities

Noting that current partnership support is no longer able to sustain the number of pastoral synod staff on which the synod relied for many years, Bishop Burkat said that she is pleased with how well “the system of shared responsibility” put in place last June has worked, deploying deans and other leaders in key areas, notably candidacy, mobility, and interim ministry. In light of the expanded responsibilities of conference deans, she shared as information the document, “Conference Dean Ministry Expectations.”

2012 Visits to Conferences

Bishop Burkat reported that this year the Fall Conference Gatherings would be reduced from three to two. In order to increase the amount of “face time” between the bishop and the synod’s constituency, she announced that she would visit as many conferences as requested over an entire year. Plans have already been made for the bishop to visit the Lower Bucks Conference (April 12, 2012), the Lower Montgomery Conference (May 15, 2012), the Upper Bucks Conference (September 18, 2012), and the Upper Montgomery Conference (October 17, 2012).

Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls)

Bishop Burkat reported that she was interviewed by Mr. David O’Reilly, Religion Editor, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, regarding the situation at Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls). In anticipation of a possible article in the Philadelphia newspaper, Bishop Burkat shared with Synod Council members a letter that she intends to send to the synod’s rostered leaders regarding the Redeemer situation.

Christian Churches Together (CCT)

Appointed by the Reverend Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), to represent the ELCA at the meetings of the ecumenical organization,

Christian Churches Together (CCT), Bishop Burkat reported on the 6th annual meeting of that organization held last week in Memphis, TN. Those, attending this meeting, visited several sites related to the Civil Rights Movement and focused their discussions on racism, extreme wealth disparity, injustice and poverty, and violence. Bishop Burkat indicated that she preached in the pulpit where the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King preached his last sermon.

Congregation Presidents/Vice Presidents Meeting

Bishop Burkat added that she plans to meet with congregation presidents and/or vice presidents on March 10, 2012, 9:00 a.m., at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

2012 Synod Assembly

Bishop Burkat reported that the theme of the 2012 Synod Assembly would be *Ecclesia Plantanda: The Church Must Be Planted*, and that the Reverend Dr. Karl Krueger would be the keynote speaker; and the Reverend Sherman Hicks, the ELCA Representative. Mr. Robert Hensil has agreed to chair the Bishop's Election Committee.

Renewal of Specialized Calls

Action on the renewal of specialized calls, for which the synod provides financial support, was postponed until the Finance Committee had an opportunity to report.

Action on the Roster

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

S. C. 12.02.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to the Reverend John Berntsen, effective January 1, 2012.

S. C. 12.02.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to the Reverend John Carlson, 1st year, effective March 1, 2012.

Bishop Burkat reported that the Reverend Sozinho Alves has ended his third year *on leave from call* and that she would discuss an extension with the Office of the Secretary at the Conference of Bishop's meeting in March 2012.

Calls to Interim Ministry

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

S. C. 12.02.03 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Paul Richard Beck to interim ministry at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Hilltown, starting January 1, 2012, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Beck resigns this call, whichever comes first.

S. C. 12.02.04 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend David Mueller to interim ministry at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Coatesville, starting March 1, 2012, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Mueller resigns this call, whichever comes first.

S. C. 12.02.05 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Arlene Greenwald to interim ministry at St. Mark Lutheran Church, Clifton Heights, starting March 1, 2012, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Greenwald resigns this call, whichever comes first.

Bishop Burkat reported that the Reverend David Oppold has submitted an application to the ELCA Specialized Ministry Accreditation Process for certification. He presently serves at the Delaware Hospice, Chadds Ford, and is ending his third year *on leave from call* from the New Jersey Synod. She said that she would discuss an extension with the Office of the Secretary at the Conference of Bishop's meeting in March 2012.

TREASURER'S AND FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Treasurer

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, presented the new format for the Income and Expense Statement, explaining the four newly created columns: Budget Unrestricted, Temporarily Restricted, Mission, and Permanently Restricted.

She reported that, for February 2011 through January 2012, Budget Unrestricted Income was \$2,443,527.16, and Total Income was \$3,615,281.12. She also reported that, for the same period, Budget Unrestricted Expenses were \$2,629,892.64, and Total Expenses were \$3,979,680.43, creating a Budget Unrestricted Deficit of \$186,365.48 and a Total Deficit of \$364,399.31. All of these figures are pre-audit. She added that, from 2010 to 2011, Partnership Support decreased by \$90,000.

Report of the Finance Committee

The Reverend Christopher Weidner, Chair, commended Ms. Neff for her work with developing the new Income and Expense Statement, bringing greater clarity to the synod's financial situation. He presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 12.02.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the disbursement of *Fund for Mission* funds to rectify the 2011-2012 deficit.

Report of the Audit Committee

Mr. Rodman Rothermel, Chair, reported that Tait, Weller & Baker LLP, Certified Public Accountants, Philadelphia, would conduct the synod's 2011 audit, adding that the firm has been requested to provide a management letter and an engagement letter. He expected the audit to begin within two weeks. When available, the committee would review a rough draft of the audit.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Robinson reported that the Executive Committee received the following resolution from the Reverend Susan Montgomery, Redeemer, Jamison:

Severe economic issues have collided with the needs of the Church and its mission. Because dollars are more difficult to stretch and the needs of God's world grow ever greater, it becomes important to consider the ways the institutional Church uses its money and to direct the disbursement of its funds in the most Christ-centered fashion.

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod adopt a schedule by which one-day regular meetings of the Synod Assembly alternate with two-day or longer regular meetings of the Synod Assembly. Exceptions to this schedule may be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council.

By alternating the duration of the Annual Assembly, both the Synod itself and its constituent churches will be able to conserve resources.

The Executive Committee responded to the resolution by acknowledging receipt of the resolution and recommending that the current practice of two-day assemblies be maintained as a way to better express "the visible unity of the Body of Christ."

The Executive Committee also discussed ways to pay closer attention to the needs of lay voting members, especially those attending the assembly for the first time, and to do more effective networking among voting members.

The Synod Council approved the following resolution:

S. C. 12.02.07 RESOLVED THAT, in response to the resolution received from the Reverend Susan Montgomery, Redeemer, Jamison, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Council gratefully acknowledges receipt of the resolution and recommends that the current practice of two-day assemblies be maintained.

Ms. Joanne Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Vision and Events, noted that, when one-day assemblies were held in 1997 and 1999, evaluations of those assemblies indicated that less than one-percent of the voting members were in favor of one-day assemblies.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, reported that he has uploaded Synod Assembly minutes (2000-2011) and Synod Council minutes (1999-2011) to the ELCA's Synodical Online Digital Archive (SODA) Archives. Access to the archive is currently limited to synod staff.

The Synod Council recessed for dinner. Bishop Burkat offered prayer.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE (Continued)

Ms. Carol Ann Murray, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Support and Development, reviewed the 2012 Spending Plan.

Because the *Fund for Mission* is being used for deficit reduction, Ms. Kimerly Hinkelman expressed a concern about its declining balance.

Bishop Burkat noted that, while funds from the *Fund for Mission* are also being used for mission, one of the key issues regarding the decline in the fund's balance is the expense of unsold church buildings under the synod's stewardship.

Stating that it is dangerous for the synod to lose its reserve, Mr. Rothermel recommended that the synod make the necessary cuts now. "If money comes in," he added, "we can put it back."

Mr. George Shultz moved to refer the 2012 Spending Plan back to the Finance Committee. The Synod Council approved the following resolution:

S. C. 12.02.08 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council refers the 2012 Spending Plan to the Finance Committee for further review.

If necessary, Synod Council members agreed to schedule a special Synod Council meeting on March 15 or 22, 2012, at 6:00 p.m., to consider a revised 2012 Spending Plan and the proposed 2013 Budget. The Reverend Henrik Sonntag offered St. Paul, Glenside, as a host site.

Renewal of Specialized Calls

Bishop Burkat presented the following resolutions:

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council renews the call to the Reverend Moses Suah Dennis as the Mission Developer of Faith Worship Center at Immanuel Lutheran Church, East Lansdowne, for a term of two years, beginning October 1, 2011, and ending September 30, 2013.

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council renews the call to the Reverend Violet Little as the Mission Developer of the Welcome Church, Philadelphia, for a term of three years, beginning January 1, 2012, and ending December 31, 2014.

The Synod Council agreed to postpone consideration of these resolutions until its March or April meetings.

SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Nominating

The Reverend Carol Ficken, Chair, reviewed the nominations that the Nominating Committee has received. She added that the committee is in a “desperate need” for more nominations. The deadline for nominations has been extended to February 29, 2012.

Administration

Ms. Carlson reported that the Administration Committee plans to meet on February 27, 2012, in order to review the agenda for the 2012 Synod Assembly.

Constitution

Pastor Raymond Miller reported that the Constitution Committee recommends that the Synod Council approve an amendment to continuing resolution **S6.04.D10**. The purpose of the amendment is simply clarification.

The Synod Council approved the following resolution by the required two-thirds vote:

S. C. 12.02.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council amends the following continuing resolution by adding the underlined words:

S6.04.D10 *The Synod Assembly shall elect two Synod Council youth representatives, one female and one male, and two Synod Council young adult representatives, one female and one male ...*

THE REPORT OF THE LUTHERAN YOUTH ORGANIZATION

Ms. Sara Barber reported that the Lutheran Youth Organization Board recently elected Mr. Malcolm Davis as President. She invited Synod Council members to encourage the youth of their congregations to participate in the Wonderfully Made retreat, April 13-15, 2012; Helping Hands Day, April 28, 2012; Synod Assembly, May 4-5, 2012; and the National Youth Gathering, July 18-22, 2012, New Orleans.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Carlson reported that Temple University has sponsored two students from SEKUCo, providing full tuition.

The Synod Council adjourned at 8:15 p.m. Vice President Robinson offered prayer.

The 120th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is scheduled for Thursday, April 19, 2012, 4:00 p.m., at St. John, Philadelphia (Mayfair).

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller
Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod