

MINUTES
of the 110th Meeting
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
April 8, 2010
Trinity Lutheran Church, Perkasio, PA

Ms. Patricia Robinson, Vice President, called to order the One Hundred Tenth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:00 p.m.

The Reverend George Detweiler, Interim Pastor, Trinity, Perkasio, offered greetings, and the Reverend Carolann Hopcke, Dean, Upper Bucks Conference, led devotions.

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 109th meeting as presented.

Vice President Robinson presented the agenda for the 110th meeting. She welcomed the Reverend Craig Settlage, Director for Mission Support, ELCA.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Conference of Bishops

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, reported that the Conference of Bishops met March 2-9, 2010, near Chicago, and spent significant time discussing and deliberating "critical and important issues." The conference reviewed the recommended revisions to current ministry policies, including changes to *Visions and Expectations* and the Candidacy Manual, which would make possible the rostering of leaders in "publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same gender relationships." The changes also make provision for recognizing the conviction of those who believe that this church should not call or roster people in such relationships. The Church Council will consider these revisions on April 9-11, 2010. Bishop Burkat also reported that she assisted with the preparation of a worship rite for welcoming to the roster those pastors, serving ELCA congregations, who were ordained under the Extraordinary Lutheran Ministry process. She added that the Board of Pensions has made provision for changes that would include medical coverage for the rostered leaders and their partners in "publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous same gender relationships."

Bishop Burkat reported that the Conference of Bishops discussed "the shocking shortfall of partnership support from congregations and synods, which is having a negative impact on the ministries and staffing of congregations, synods, and churchwide units."

Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls)

Bishop Burkat updated the Synod Council on the legal proceedings pertaining to Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls). On March 23, 2010, Judge James Murray Lynn, Common Pleas Court, Philadelphia, signed an order to file the deed for the Redeemer

property, thus transferring the title for the congregation's property to the synod.

Short Term Financial Decisions and Long Term Planning

Bishop Burkat reported that the Finance and the Executive committees met to discuss the synod's financial shortfall of \$230,000 to \$300,000 in mission support from congregations in 2009. In order to address this shortfall, the committees took the following actions:

- Eliminate two staff positions by not filling the two open positions -- one, pastoral; the other administrative;
- Cut administrative expenses by \$40,000;
- Cut synod-supported agencies and institutions by 10%; and
- Reduce the percentage of partnership support to the churchwide organization from 53.5% to 50%.

The committees made no decision on reducing salaries and eliminating staff positions.

At its meeting on March 25, 2010, the Executive Committee discussed short term and long term planning and made plans to gather a task force to make recommendations on future synodical ministry, based on the synod's core priorities, principles, and directions.

Action on the Roster

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

S. C. 10.04.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status for a first year to the Reverend Susan Lynch, effective May 1, 2010; and for a second year to the Reverend Jesse Brown, effective April 2, 2010.

SYNOD-CHURCHWIDE CONSULTATION

Pastor Settlage opened his presentation by quoting the late church historian Jaroslav Pelikan, who said, "If Christ is not raised, nothing else matters. If Christ is raised, nothing else matters." He noted that, in regard to the mission of the church, nothing else matters.

Emphasizing the partnership among congregations, synods, and churchwide organization, he noted no expression of the church is able to make a decision unilaterally without affecting the others.

He defined "benevolence" as "what we do beyond ourselves."

He expressed concern about the misinformation being circulated about the rostering changes approved by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly.

Synod Council members then watched a video presentation featuring a message from the Reverend Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the stories of four mission sites receiving financial support from the ELCA: Immanuel, Detroit; Living Grace, West Omaha; a doctoral candidate at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago; and military chaplaincy.

Pastor Settlage challenged Synod Council members to say no to reducing the percentage of partnership support from 53.5% to 50%. He also stated that all expressions of the church need to do a better job of saying what the church is doing.

The Synod Council recessed for dinner. Pastor Settlage offered prayer.

SYNOD-CHURCHWIDE CONSULTATION (Continued)

Following a lengthy discussion, the Synod Council approved the following resolution:

S. C. 10.04.02 RESOLVED THAT, as a first step in addressing the synod's current financial situation, the Synod Council establishes the clear expectation that its members, as an act of personal stewardship, make a financial gift to the synod for deficit reduction and calls upon them to make a personal pledge for that purpose before the 2010 Synod Assembly.

The number of Synod Council members making a pledge will be shared at this year's Synod Assembly.

The Vice President and the Secretary will prepare a letter to Synod Council members, requesting pledges.

The Synod Council also approved the following resolution, eleven voted yes, and seven, no:

S. C. 10.04.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council restores the percentage for partnership support in the 2010 spending plan to 53.5%, and amends the percentage for partnership support in the 2011 proposed budget, changing the percentage from 50% to 53.5%.

In support of this resolution, the Synod Council expressed support for a suggestion to develop a group that would make visits to congregations on an ongoing basis.

Synod Council members also volunteered to contact congregations that had not sent a mission support intent for 2010 to the synod office.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Robinson reported that the Executive Committee approved the proposed

agenda for the 2010 Synod Assembly as amended (E. C./S. C. 10.03.01).

She presented the following resolution which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 10.04.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants permission to the Seamen's Church Institute, Philadelphia, to share information about its ministry with the synod's congregations.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 10.04.05 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extends a three-year term call to the Reverend Julie DeWerth to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, King of Prussia, beginning June 1, 2010, until May 31, 2013.

Pastor Miller noted an error in the resolution (S. C. 09.09.04), granting a call to the Reverend Carolyn Huff, and presented a revised resolution, which the Synod Council approved retroactively:

S. C. 10.04.06 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants a two-year "Authorization for Extended Service" to the Reverend Carolyn Huff to serve as the Associate Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Fairview Village, PA, starting November 29, 2009, and ending November 30, 2011, at which time the Synod Council may renew the term.

REPORTS OF SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Administration: The Reverend Lee Miller reported that the Executive Committee approved the agenda for the 2010 Synod Assembly.

Congregations: Mr. Robert Hensil presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 10.04.07 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council grants full approval to the constitution of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, Limerick, with the provision that the 2009 changes to the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations be incorporated in accordance with paragraph C17.04. A list of items will be sent to the congregation.

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS

Ms. Susan Pursch reminded Synod Council members that all of the synod's Social

Ministry Organizations began with one Lutheran seeing a need. She invited Synod Council members to share with others the information on the report distributed to them.

REPORT OF MEN IN MISSION

The Reverend Christopher Weidner reported that on April 10, 2010, participants from the Northeastern Pennsylvania and Southeastern Pennsylvania synods would gather at Muhlenberg College to reflect on and envision men's ministry in eastern Pennsylvania.

OLD BUSINESS

In response to a request from Mr. Henry Fields to address the Synod Council about financial concerns at Trinity, South Philadelphia, Mr. Hensil reported that an independent audit found the congregation's finances satisfactory. As such, the Executive Committee recommended that Mr. Fields' request be denied.

The Synod Council adjourned at 8:30 p.m. Bishop Burkat offered prayer.

Raymond A. Miller
Secretary

Unapproved by Synod Council