

MINUTES
of the 112th Meeting
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
September 9, 2010
Grace Lutheran Church, Royersford, PA

Ms. Patricia Robinson, Vice President, called to order the One Hundred Twelfth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:10 p.m.

The Reverends Paul Neff and Janelle Kraiss, Pastors, Grace, Royersford, welcomed Synod Council members. Pastor Neff, also Dean of the Upper Montgomery Conference, led devotions.

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 111th meeting as presented.

Vice President Robinson presented the agenda for the 112th meeting.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP

Trip to Tanzania, July 28-August 11, 2010

Noting the difficulties that she faced over the past summer, the Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, reported that the best part of the summer was her trip to the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania. The most astonishing experience of the trip, she said, was the opportunity to preach to 400 Maasai at an outdoor worship service during an annual three-day festival. She described the North Eastern Diocese as "a great partner in mission," that has much to teach Christians in the United States.

Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls)

Bishop Burkat updated Synod Council members on the legal actions related to Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls), and the inappropriate involvement of the Reverend Luther Gotwald, a member of the Allegheny Synod. Synod Council members discussed the possibility of sending a letter to Pastor Gotwald's bishop.

Holy Trinity, Abington

Bishop Burkat reported that Holy Trinity, Abington, has scheduled a second vote on September 12, 2010, to consider the resolution for terminating its relationship with the ELCA. She also reported that she and additional synodical leaders held two consultations with Holy Trinity members, June 28, 2010, and July 18, 2010. In addition, Holy Trinity has stated its intention to join the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), formed on August 27, 2010. Bishop Burkat indicated that, because Holy Trinity is a former LCA congregation, the Synod Council would need to approve Holy Trinity's action for the termination of its relationship with the ELCA (**9.62.g.**, *Constitution, Bylaws, and*

Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

Note: On September 12, 2010, Holy Trinity, Abington, met as planned. The results of the second vote for terminating its relationship with the ELCA were the following: voting members present, 156; yes votes, 134; no votes, 22.

St. James, Philadelphia

Bishop Burkat reported that she received a letter from St. James, Philadelphia, indicating their intention to terminate their relationship with the ELCA. St. James has scheduled a first vote for September 12, 2010.

Steps in the Dissolution of a Congregation

Bishop Burkat reported that three congregations have closed this year: First, Collingdale; Calvary, Philadelphia (Bustleton); and Redeemer, Philadelphia (East Falls). She presented to the Synod Council the first draft of a document outlining the steps for the dissolution of a congregation that would help a congregation to navigate the process, answer common concerns, and enable more effective communication with the synod, the conference, and the congregational membership. She requested volunteers to review the document prior to the Synod Council's meeting on December 2, 2010. The Reverends Sandra Brown, Patricia Davenport, and Lee Miller; Sister Jane Roper, and Ms. Jill Meuser volunteered.

Taste and See

Bishop Burkat invited Synod Council members to attend one of the three fall conference gatherings, scheduled for October 10, 17, and 24, 2010, at various locations. The theme is *Taste and See That the Lord is Good*.

Thank You and Godspeed to Susan Pursch

Noting that Ms. Susan Pursch has left her position as a congregational liaison for Liberty Lutheran Services, Bishop Burkat expressed the synod's gratitude to Ms. Pursch for her "enormous love, generosity of service, and faithful commitment to Christ and his Church." She presented a plaque to Ms. Pursch.

Action on the Roster

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

S. C. 10.09.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to:

- **The Reverend Maggie Ainslie, 1st year for continuing education, effective July 1, 2010;**

- The Reverend Regina Goodrich, 2nd year, effective August 12, 2010;
- The Reverend Gwendolyn King, 2nd year, effective October 1, 2010;
- The Reverend David Mueller, 2nd year, effective August 31, 2010;
- The Reverend Kris Chandler, 2nd year, effective August 25, 2010;
- The Reverend Timothy Poston, 1st year, effective July 12, 2010;
- The Reverend Elaine Quincey, 2nd year, effective October 26, 2010;
- The Reverend Leah Schade, 2nd year for continuing education, effective August 31, 2010;
- The Reverend Patrick Seyler, 2nd year for continuing education, effective September 1, 2010;
- Sister Margaret Thorne, 1st year, effective September 16, 2010; and
- Ms. Rebecca Kolowe, Diaconal Minister, 1st year, effective August 22, 2010.

S. C. 10.09.02 RESOLVED THAT the Reverend Dr. Peter Krey be granted his first extension of *on leave from call* status for a period of one year from the ELCA Conference of Bishops as he has exhausted his first three years *on leave*,

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council requests an approval of this extension from the ELCA Conference of Bishops.

S. C. 10.09.03 RESOLVED THAT the Reverend Priscila Curet be granted her second extension of *on leave from call* status for a period of one year from the ELCA Conference of Bishops as she has exhausted her first *on leave* extension,

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council requests an approval of this extension from the ELCA Conference of Bishops.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Vice President Robinson distributed a list of committee assignments for Synod Council members. She indicated that she would add the Synod Constitution Committee to that list and reported that Mr. Barry Stock would serve as chair of that committee.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Call to Interim Ministry

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

S. C. 10.09.04 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Daryl Nelson to interim ministry at Grace Lutheran Church, Hatfield, PA, starting October 1, 2010, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Nelson resigns this call, whichever comes first.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Mr. Richard Reimet, Treasurer, reported that Partnership Support for February-July 2010 was \$1,149,445, a decrease of \$54,542, or 4.5%, for the same period in 2009; World Hunger for February-July 2010 was \$72,971, a decrease of \$12,237, or 14.3%, for the same period in 2009; and Lutheran Charities for February-July 2010 was \$78,971, an increase of \$9,587, or 13.8%, for the same period in 2009. He noted as a positive sign that the percentage of decrease for partnership support has been declining month-by-month.

Bishop Burkat added that so far this year 119 intents for partnership support have been received from congregations. Sixty of those 119 were received before the 2010 Synod Assembly.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Reviewing the "2010 Spending Plan as of July 2010," Mr. Reimet noted the plan's forecast of a total year deficit of \$255,789 for 2010. He expressed hope that interest and dividends would be higher than anticipated.

Ms. Kimerly Hinkelman asked how the synod planned to cover that deficit. Mr. Reimet indicated that the deficit would be covered by improved intents and the Fund for Mission. Bishop Burkat added that another source of possible income for deficit reduction would be the synod's annual campaign *For All the Saints*. She also expressed a hope that, through increased contacts with congregations and potential donors, the deficit would be further reduced.

REPORT OF YOUTH MINISTRY

Bishop Burkat reported that 116 youth and adults participated in the synod's South Dakota Servant Trip in July 2010.

REPORT OF THE SOCIAL MINISTRY ORGANIZATIONS

Sister Jane Roper reported that the paraments from Calvary, Philadelphia (Bustleton), had been donated to Manatawny Manor, Pottstown.

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

OLD BUSINESS

Holy Trinity, Abington

Anticipating that Holy Trinity, Abington, would approve the resolution to terminate its relationship with the ELCA, the Synod Council planned a special meeting on September

22, 2010, for the purpose of considering whether to approve Holy Trinity's action to terminate. Synod Council members also considered a possible agenda.

Financial Planning Group

Ms. Tracey Beasley, Mr. Lawrence House, and Mr. Rod Rothermel updated the Synod Council on the work of the Financial Planning Group. They reported that the group had audited the books (actual vs. budget), interviewed some staff, and met with the bishop. The group is planning to meet with the treasurer and the past chair of the Finance Committee, interview more staff, and review the synod's investments. Among the group's recommendations so far are the following: new accounting software; preparation of monthly financial statements, consisting of a balance sheet; and approval of expenditures over \$500 by the business manager.

Mr. Rothermel noted that the group is recommending that the synod take a whole new financial approach, recognizing that capital assets, like the Fund for Mission, should not be used for every day expenditures.

Mr. House added that, if the synod continues with "business as usual," it will deplete its reserves within one-and-one-half years and not be able to function "as we know it."

Bishop Burkat expressed appreciation for the group's work, while noting a concern to keep in balance the hard financial facts and a good heart and desire to be faithful.

Mr. Rothermel described a healthy budget process as working from "the bottom up" rather than from "the top down," adding that the challenge is for the synod to re-invent itself with its \$2.5 million income.

REPORTS OF SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Congregations: Ms. Jill Meuser presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 10.09.05 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council grants full approval to Section C12.05.c. of the constitution of St. John, Folcroft.

There were no other reports.

COMPANION SYNOD REPORT

Ms. Joanne Carlson reported that the Companion Synod Sunday, as planned in previous years, would not take place this October.

NEW BUSINESS

Committee on Discipline

The Synod Council approved the following resolution:

S. C. 10.09.06 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council elects the Reverend Susan Montgomery as a clergy member of the Committee on Discipline for a term ending 2016.

Synod African Descent Strategy

Pastor Davenport presented to the Synod Council the first draft of a document outlining a strategy for increasing the awareness and relevance of the Lutheran Church in the communities of African descendants. She requested that Synod Council members provide feedback before the Synod Council meeting on December 2, 2010.

Bear Creek Camp

Vice President Robinson reported that Bear Creek Camp has requested that the Synod Council approve the transfer of the camp's property from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod to the Eastern Pennsylvania Lutheran Camp Corporation, adding that the Executive Committee supports the transfer in concept. She said that the necessary documents would be reviewed by legal counsel and then submitted to the Synod Council for approval.

The Synod Council adjourned at 8:25 p.m. Bishop Burkat offered prayer.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller
Secretary