

MINUTES
Of the 126th MEETING
Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
June 6, 2013
Advent Lutheran Church, Richboro, PA

The Reverend Paul Sorcek, Pastor, Advent, Richboro, welcomed Synod Council members, and the Reverend Jackson Haas, Dean, Lower Bucks Conference, led devotions.

Vice President Tracey Beasley called to order the One Hundred Twenty-sixth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:30 p.m. At the Vice President's request, Synod Council members introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 125th meeting of the Synod Council and the minutes of the 26th annual Synod Assembly as presented.

SETTING OF THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the 126th meeting.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Welcome to Synod Council

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, welcomed Ms. Tracey Beasley to her first Synod Council meeting as Vice President. She thanked Synod Council member, Ms. Doreen Kinzler, for her willingness to serve as a nominee for Vice President. She also welcomed newly elected and re-elected Synod Council members.

2013 Synod Assembly

Bishop Burkat noted some of the key moments of the 2013 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly, which used as its theme, *Show Me: We Want to See Jesus*:

- The two presentations by keynote speaker, the Reverend Jay Gamelin, Pilgrim, Lexington, SC;
- The Music and Worship Seminar led by Pastor Gamelin and Mr. Justin Rimbo, Music Director, Jacob's Well, Minneapolis, MN;
- The address by the Churchwide Representative, the Reverend Neil Harrison, Program Director for Congregational Renewal, Congregation and Synodical Mission Unit, ELCA;
- The recognition of Ms. Patricia Robinson, who retired after serving "twelve exciting years" as this synod's Vice President;
- The comprehensive financial reports provided by this synod's Treasurer, Ms. Janet Neff;

- The presentation of the 2014 budget by the Reverend Christopher Weidner, Chair of the Finance Committee;
- The update given by this synod’s youth-led Malaria Campaign Team, which reported that more than \$120,000 has been contributed to the campaign, well above the goal of \$100,000;
- The announcement of resources to “help congregations encourage a culture of mission,” being developed by the newly formed Mission Planning Team;
- The live greetings brought by means of skype from the missionaries, Ms. Susan MacPherson and Mr. Tom MacPherson, at the Irete Children’s Home in the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania;
- The reminder by the Reformation 500 Team that 2017 is the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s posting of the 95 Theses; and
- Saturday morning’s worship experience of centering prayer and singing led by Mr. Waverly Alston, Music Director of the Welcome Church, Philadelphia.

Bishop Burkat thanked the synod’s officers, staff, parliamentarian, committee chairs, and the worship team for their leadership at the assembly.

She also thanked those who attended the appreciation dinner for former Vice President, Ms. Patricia Robinson, on May 10, 2013.

50th Jubilee of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania

Bishop Burkat reported that she and Ms. Joanne Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Mission and Events, would be traveling to Tanzania June 11-25, 2013, as ELCA representatives at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. Under **+S8.58**, she indicated her wish to appoint, with the consent of the Synod Council, the Reverend Patricia Davenport, this synod’s Director for Evangelical Mission, to serve as “acting bishop” during her absence.

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

S. C. 13.06.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council consents to the appointment by Bishop Claire Burkat of the Reverend Patricia Davenport to serve as Acting Bishop of this synod from June 11 to 25, 2013.

New Jersey Synod Assembly

Bishop Burkat reported that she would be attending the New Jersey Synod Assembly June 6-8, 2013, in East Brunswick, NJ, as that synod says goodbye to its bishop, the Reverend Roy Riley, who is retiring after 22 years. She added that the Reverend Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, has appointed her to mentor the new bishop to be elected at that assembly.

Lutheran Charities

Bishop Burkat reported that Ms. Carol Hammarberg, Coordinator of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's Lutheran Charities Appeal, has retired, adding that she would be joining other Social Ministry Organization representatives in examining how and in what form Lutheran Charities should organize for the future. She hoped to have a recommendation for the September 2013 meeting of the Synod Council.

2013 Churchwide Assembly

Bishop Burkat reported that, on May 19, 2013, she met with this synod's voting members of the Churchwide Assembly, August 12-17, 2013, and reviewed the agenda. Mr. Bert Glenn and Ms. Linda Manson reviewed the basic components of the proposed social statement, *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries*.

Portico Benefits

Bishop Burkat noted that Portico Benefit Services' Regional Representative, Ms. Barbara Demski, reported at the 2013 Synod Assembly that her organization is committed to leading the ELCA through the changes mandated by the Affordable Care Act and that further details would be available in August 2013. Among the documents made available to Synod Council members for this meeting was the *ELCA Philosophy of Benefits* statement.

Battalion Chief Michael Goodwin

Bishop Burkat reported that, on April 6, 2013, the Reverend Marjorie Neale, Pastor, St. Michael, Philadelphia (Kensington), led the funeral service for Mr. Michael Goodwin, St. Michael's president and a Philadelphia firefighter who died fighting a blaze in South Philadelphia. Bishop Burkat also reported that, on May 17, 2013, she served as Master of Ceremonies and preached at the Memorial Service for Mr. Goodwin, sponsored by the Office of the Mayor, the City of Philadelphia, and the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia, and crafted by the Reverend William Vanderslice, Pastor, St. Paul, Red Hill, and a childhood friend of Mr. Goodwin.

Approval of a New Mission Field

Bishop Burkat reported that Ms. Leila Ortiz declined the call to serve as the Mission Developer of Learning/Knowing Christ Latino/a Ministry, located at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Philadelphia (Olney), approved by the Synod Council (**S. C. 13.04.02**).

Extension of Call Requests

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

S. C. 13.06.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council requests that the Reverend David Oppold be granted a two-year extension of *On Leave from Call for Graduate Study* status from the ELCA Conference of Bishops, effective February 1, 2013.

S. C. 13.06.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council requests that the Reverend Margaret Ainslie be granted a two-year extension of *On Leave from Call for Graduate Study* status from the ELCA Conference of Bishops, effective June 1, 2013.

Recommendation for a Term Call

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

S. C. 13.06.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a three-year term to Sister Margaret Thorne as Bereavement Coordinator at Gentiva Hospice, Blue Bell, PA, beginning May 29, 2013 to May 28, 2016.

Action on the Roster

Retirement

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

S. C. 13.06.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to the Reverend David B. Anderson, effective July 1, 2013.

On Leave from Call Requests

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

S. C. 13.06.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to Sister Mary Julia McKenzie, 1st year, effective June 30, 2013; the Reverend William McGowan, 1st year, effective July 1, 2013; and Ms. Nancy Selinger, Diaconal Minister, 1st year, effective June 9, 2013.

To avoid the appearance of any possible conflict of interest, Sister Mary Julia McKenzie abstained.

Removal from the Roster

Bishop Burkat reported that the Reverend Lindsay Allen Rhodenbaugh voluntarily resigned from the roster of ordained ministers.

Call to Interim Ministry

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

S. C. 13.06.07 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Donna M. Wright to interim ministry at St. John Lutheran Church, Melrose Park, PA, starting June 17, 2013 and

extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Wright resigns this call, whichever comes first.

Memorial Service for Dr. Sheneman

Bishop Burkat reported that she planned to attend the Memorial Service for the Reverend Dr. Lloyd Sheneman on June 29, 2013.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Beasley thanked the Executive Committee for the “sweet and kind” welcome that she received at the May 2013 meeting. She added that she is “humbled and privileged to serve the synod. As you know,” she continued, “I love the church.”

Describing herself as “the new sheriff in town,” she noted that the Executive Committee had placed time limits on the agenda, reduced the number of regular Synod Council meetings this year from five to four, and set the time for dinner later in the meeting. She requested that Synod Council members send her an email at least one week before each Synod Council meeting to indicate if they do not plan to stay for dinner.

She indicated that the orientation for new members would take place at dinner.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, reported that, by the closing date on May 1, 2013, the Synod Council approved by an email vote a one-year extension for Ms. Susan MacPherson and Mr. Thomas MacPherson to serve as volunteer missionaries in Tanzania: 25 total votes, 24 yes, 1 abstained. He requested that the Synod Council affirm that vote by approving the following resolution:

S. C. 13.06.08 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the results of the email vote that closed on May 1, 2013, approving a one-year extension (November 2013-November 2014) for Susan and Tom MacPherson to serve as volunteer missionaries at the Irete Children's Home in the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. This extension is to be a continuation of the Shared Personnel Placement by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod and the ELCA Global Mission Unit.

The Synod Council approved the resolution.

Secretary Miller also reported that the Synod Council currently has two open positions: Lower Bucks Conference Representative, male (2014), and Young Adult, male (2016). He added that Mr. George Schultz had resigned.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer, reviewed three documents made available to Synod Council members: the Statement of Financial Position, the Income and Expense Statement, and the 2013 Congregational Giving Report. She noted that the pre-paid rent line in the Statement of Financial Position represents the balance of the funds that the synod paid the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia for building renovations that would include space for a synod office and that it, or some portion of it, would be returned if the synod office re-locates off the seminary campus before the lease expires. She also noted that the 2013 Congregational Giving Report includes a new column entitled "Partnership Support as a Percentage of Regular Giving."

Ms. Susan Pursch suggested that lay Synod Council members be utilized to contact congregations which have contributed nothing to partnership support.

Expressing support for the idea of lay volunteers visiting congregations, Bishop Burkat noted three ways in which the synod may utilize lay visitors: (1) make informal contacts with pastors and congregational leaders, (2) make contacts in conjunction with the Stewardship Team, and (3) make visits as part of a serious fund-raising effort.

Pastor Weidner offered the observation that the synod's fiscal year may not coincide with the fiscal year of congregations, thus creating a possible misrepresentation of congregational giving.

Finance Committee

Pastor Weidner listed the following items for future attention: investment policy and procedures, spending policy, rent for the synod office at the seminary and office space alternatives, cost of maintaining empty church buildings versus selling them at a lower price, posting financial documents for public review on the synod's website, and future Finance Committee Structure.

Audit Committee

Mr. Rodman Rothermel, Chair of the Audit Committee, noted that "the results of the audit," known as *Financial Statements and Report of Independent Certified Public Accounts*, dated January 31, 2013, "are not good." He also drew Synod Council members' attention to two letters provided by Tait/Weller, Certified Public Accountants: (1) a Synod Management Letter, addressed to the Audit Committee and dated April 29, 2013, and (2) a Professional Standards Letter, addressed to the Synod Council and dated April 17, 2013.

He explained the nature of an audit, indicating that an outside firm reviews an organization's finances and makes a report, but that the organization, in this case, the Synod Council, is ultimately responsible for the financial numbers and procedures.

He stated that, because of the havoc created by the new financial software, the synod was not ready for the audit this year.

He then expressed a concern that the synod's current assets are not sufficient to cover its current liabilities, based on the numbers provided in the Unrestricted Funds column on Page C-5 of the audit, dated January 31, 2013,

Vice President Beasley attempted to summarize Mr. Rothermel's concern by saying that "what you are asking is: What is the plan for dealing with the deficit?"

Ms. Neff challenged the notion that the funds in the *Fund for Mission* should be considered "restricted," since that fund is the only place for the synod to charge its deficits. She reiterated the concern that congregations be asked "to give something to be a part of this church."

Bishop Burkat said that she looked forward to bringing recommendations to the Synod Council at its September 2013 meeting, regarding these financial issues.

Mr. Rothermel recommended that the synod identify staff members to be trained in the financial software, so that there are no more errors.

Vice President Beasley said that there are already plans in place for this training.

The Synod Council recessed for a short break.

SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Vice President Beasley distributed a form on which she requested Synod Council members to indicate three talents, gifts, or abilities and then their preferences for Synod Council committee assignments. She asked the committee chairs to describe the work of their committees.

Election of Executive Committee Members

Vice President Beasley asked for nominations for the clergy, lay female, and lay male positions on the Synod Council's Executive Committee.

Nominated for the clergy position were Pastors Sandra Brown and Karl Richard. Synod Council members cast 15 votes for Pastor Karl Richard and 8 votes for Pastor Sandra Brown. Vice President Beasley declared Pastor Karl Richard elected.

Nominated for the lay female position was Ms. Margie Pendarvis-Wright. There were no additional nominations. Vice President Beasley declared Ms. Pendarvis-Wright elected.

Nominated for the lay male position was Mr. Robert Hensil. There were no additional nominations. Vice President Beasley declared Mr. Hensil elected.

OLD BUSINESS

Sister Mary Julia McKenzie asked about the development of a sabbatical policy for roster leaders in response to **S. A. 12.05.15**. Vice President Beasley reported that the Executive Committee is considering options.

NEW BUSINESS

Bishop Burkat commented on the election of the Reverend Craig Satterlee, who is legally blind, as bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, and the Reverend R. Guy Erwin, who is a partnered gay man and a Native American, as bishop of the Southwest California Synod, and noted that these elections challenge us to consider how the work of the bishop may be done differently in the future.

Secretary Miller presented a request from the Tanzania Companionship Team to combine the various Tanzania-related fund-raising efforts and designate one month in 2014 as *Tanzania Month*. Pastor Weidner moved to refer to the matter to the Executive Committee. The Synod Council approved.

The Synod Council adjourned at 6:35 p.m. Pastor Karl Richard offered prayer.

The 127th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is Thursday, September 19, 2013, 4:00 p.m., at a location to be determined.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller
Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod