

**MINUTES**  
**Of the 130th MEETING**  
**Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**June 5, 2014**  
**Resurrection Lutheran Church, Horsham, PA**

The Reverend Ellen Meissgeier, Pastor, Resurrection, Horsham, welcomed Synod Council members and the Reverend Julie DeWerth, Dean, Lower Montgomery Conference, led worship.

Ms. Tracey Beasley, Vice President, called to order the One Hundred Thirtieth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:35 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 129th meeting of the Synod Council as amended and the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Synod Assembly as presented.

**SETTING OF THE AGENDA**

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the 130th meeting.

**BISHOP'S REPORT**

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, welcomed those newly elected or re-elected by the Synod Assembly, which took place on May 2-3, 2014.

**2014 Synod Assembly**

“This ELCA tag line, *God’s Work, Our Hands*, simply yet powerfully describes our trust in God and the evangelical witness of the ELCA,” noted Bishop Burkat. “We were blessed to have as our opening service preacher and keynote speaker, the Reverend Dr. Mark S. Hanson.” Worshipers, gathered for the assembly’s opening service, contributed \$5,823 to the ELCA Fund for Leaders in former Presiding Bishop Hanson’s honor.

She also noted as highlights of the assembly the presentations by the Reverend Dr. David Lose, Kairos and Associates; Ms. Tracey Beasley, Vice President; Ms. Janet Neff, Treasurer; and the Reverend Karl Richard, Chair, Finance Committee; and the skyped visit with Ms. Susan MacPherson and Mr. Tom MacPherson from the Irete Children’s Home in the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania.

She expressed her gratitude to the officers, staff, and many volunteers for enabling the business of the assembly to run smoothly.

## **Region 7 Synod Assemblies**

Bishop Burkat reported on the re-election of the Reverend Robert Rimbo as the Bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod and the Reverend Samuel Zeiser as the Bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod. She added that the Reverend John Macholz has been elected as the Bishop of the Upstate New York Synod.

## **Reformation 500 Team**

Bishop Burkat reported, “The Reformation 500 Team continues to make plans for the marking [in 2017] of the 500th anniversary of Luther posting his Ninety-Five Theses on Wittenberg church doors... This June I will be joining a delegation of lay and some clergy for a trip to Wittenberg [Germany] organized by Pastor Stephen Godsall-Myers who, with his wife Jean, were ELCA Global Missionaries at Wittenberg for four years.”

Since Bishop Burkat will be in Europe from June 15 to 25, 2014, the Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

**S. C. 14.06.01 RESOLVED THAT, in fulfillment of +S8.58. of the synod’s constitution, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoints the Reverend Patricia Davenport to serve as the Acting Bishop of this synod during Bishop Burkat’s absence from June 15 to 25, 2014.**

## **LTSP Presidential Search Committee**

Bishop Burkat reported that, upon the recommendation of the Presidential Search Committee, the Board of Trustees of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia has elected the Reverend Dr. David Lose to serve as the seminary’s next president. As such, the Presidential Search Committee, of which she is a member, has concluded its work.

## **Portico Benefits**

“The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod has done it for the very first time,” Bishop Burkat reported, “achieving more than 65% Mayo Clinic Health Assessment participation and earning a 2% discount on all 2014 ELCA health plan contributions for our congregations and other employers.”

## **Kairos and Associates**

“With the approval of the Synod Council,” reported Bishop Burkat, “we engaged Kairos [and Associates] to conduct a deep listening and feasibility study for our synod as we discerned the time and season for a synod funding campaign. Since February, our Synod Council, staff, deans, and other constituents met with Mr. Jeff Kjellberg, owner of Kairos, and Dr. Lose. More than 1,000 electronic Landscape Surveys went out to key rostered and lay leaders on our synod territory. These online surveys, consisting of 60 multiple choice questions, were tabulated as part of a sophisticated feasibility instrument to help determine energy in various ministry areas of

this synod. I also hosted two Bishop's Summits with key leaders from many of our synod teams to engage synod stakeholders in deep listening to the hopes and dreams of rostered and lay leaders for a vital future for mission in the synod.

“At our Synod Assembly, Dr. David Lose highlighted what Kairos has learned about the energy and vitality already present in our synod, as well as the areas needing strengthening. He noted four significant findings from Part One: (1) we know we need to change; (2) there is a consensus around strengthening our Lutheran identity; (3) we have an opportunity to clarify the role of the synod; and (4) synods lead by equipping congregations and leaders. ‘God is up to something bigger,’ Dr. Lose told the assembly. ‘God’s future is rarely what we imagined. The earliest Christians weren’t called Christians; they were called the People on the Way. We are people on the way as we walk together.’

“We are now engaging in Phase 2 of the Kairos recommended process in which we craft the case statement for rollout in the fall.”

### **Same-Gender Marriage**

“As the result of a ruling by the United States District Court on May 20, 2014,” Bishop Burkat reported, “and an announcement by Governor Corbett that his administration will not seek an appeal, same-gender marriage is legal in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This makes Pennsylvania the 19th state to legalize same-gender marriages.”

Bishop Burkat reported that she sent a pastoral letter by email on June 3, 2014 to rostered leaders, Congregation Council leaders, synod staff, and Synod Council members. The letter sought to answer the question: *What, if anything, does this mean for the pastors, lay leaders, and congregations of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?* She invited Synod Council members to offer comments.

Ms. Susan Pursch noted that “now is the time for the synod to intentionally engage congregations in conversation on this issue.”

In this regard, Bishop Burkat stated that it is important to support rostered leaders and congregations, whether they support or oppose same-gender marriage.

Mr. Rod Rothermel recommended that the synod state “no preference” on this issue but merely outline the facts.

More specifically, Bishop asked, “What is the consensus of the Synod Council on whether the bishop shall officiate at same-gender marriages?”

The consensus of the Synod Council seemed to be that, since this issue is a matter of pastoral discretion, the bishop should honor her conscience. Furthermore, the bishop should treat equally requests for her to officiate at opposite-gender and same-gender marriages.

Bishop Burkat noted that, in many areas, the synod finds itself in “a time of change,” in which the possibility of same-gender marriage is something that this synod particularly needs “to live into.” She indicated that she remains “open for dialogue.”

### **Action on the Roster**

#### ***Calls to Specialized Ministry***

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, presented the following resolution:

**S. C. 14.06.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a three-year term call for the Reverend Brian Cox as Chaplain at Wesley Enhanced Living in Pennypack Park, effective June 5, 2014.**

The Synod Council discussed this resolution in executive session.

The Synod Council approved a motion to table this resolution until its September 2014 meeting, requesting that the bishop consult on this matter with the Reverend Dr. Dolores Littleton and seek more information from Wesley Enhanced Living and Pastor Cox.

*The Synod Council recessed for dinner. The Reverend Paul Sorcek offered prayer. During dinner, new Synod Council members participated in an orientation session led by Secretary Miller, Treasurer Neff, and Ms. Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations and Executive Assistant to the Bishop.*

#### ***Calls to Specialized Ministry (continued)***

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

**S. C. 14.06.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a three-year term call for the Reverend Ghislaine Cotnoir as Director of Pastoral Care at Lutheran Community at Telford, effective June 5, 2014.**

#### ***Retirement Requests***

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

**S. C. 14.06.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants retirement status to Sister Sally L. Kerr, effective July 1, 2014; the Reverend John H. Wolford, effective July 1, 2014; and the Reverend Marcia M. Thompson, effective August 1, 2014.**

#### ***On Leave from Call Requests***

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

**S. C. 14.06.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to the Reverend Dayle A. Malloy, 1<sup>st</sup> year, effective April 1, 2014; Ms. Nancy Selinger, Diaconal Minister, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, effective June 9, 2014; Sister Mary Julia McKenzie, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, effective June 30, 2014; and the Reverend Paul J. Xander, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, effective July 22, 2014.**

### *Interim Ministry*

Pastor Miller noted that the Reverend Richard A. Mathisen, retired, has been appointed to interim ministry at Immanuel, Philadelphia (Somerton), effective April 1, 2014.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Vice President Beasley shared a message from Ms. Joanne Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Vision and Events, expressing deep thanks to Synod Council members for their assistance as pages and with registration at the Synod Assembly.

She noted that the Executive Committee has initiated a mentor program for new Synod Council members and thanked those who have volunteered to serve as mentors.

She encouraged Synod Council members, in an effort to build community among Synod Council members, to consider dinner as part of the meeting. She requested that those, who must be absent from dinner, to let her know ahead of time.

She reported that the Reverend Regina Goodrich has been appointed Chair of the Nominating Committee and Ms. Sue Massey as Chair of the Constitution Committee. Ms. Doreen Kinzler continues to serve as Chair of the Administration Committee, Pastor Karl Richard as Chair of the Finance Committee, and Mr. Rod Rothermel as Chair of the Audit Committee.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Secretary Miller reported that the Reverend Henrik Sonntag has resigned as a Synod Council member and that the Executive Committee is considering a replacement.

### **Affirmation of Previous Email Votes**

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

**S. C. 14.06.06 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council affirms its approval of the following resolutions by email vote:**

**RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend J. Christian McMullan to interim ministry at St. James Lutheran Church, Limerick, PA, starting April 12, 2014, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Rev. J. Christian McMullan resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

**RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Elaine C. Quincey to interim ministry at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Sassamansville, PA, starting May 1, 2014 extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Quincey resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

## **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

### **Report of the Treasurer**

Treasurer Neff reported that the mission support that congregations provide to the synod is down by \$111,000 over the first three months of this fiscal year.

Ms. Pursch asked for information on the outcomes of the contacts made by the Stewardship Committee to congregations.

Pastor Patricia Davenport, Director for Evangelical Mission, reported that the Stewardship Committee's contacts are being coordinated with the Mission Advancement Campaign at the suggestion of Kairos and Associates.

Bishop Burkat noted that the deans have made some contacts with congregations regarding mission support.

Pastor Davenport added that, in these contacts, the synod has recognized the importance of saying "thank you," regardless of the amount that a congregation gives.

### **Report of the Audit Committee**

Mr. Rothermel offered his perception that the synod's financial decline has "bottomed out" and that the synod "is operating according to its needs" as it works to control costs. He said that he expected the synod to finish the next fiscal year "in the black" without touching its mission funds.

Because of discrepancies in the amount of partnership support that the synod has sent to the churchwide organization, he noted, the audit remains a draft until the amount of partnership support is confirmed by the ELCA.

Expressing a concern about the synod's ownership of stocks, he requested that the synod form a committee to make recommendations about what to do with its stocks.

He also suggested that the synod begin a process of reviewing its inactive funds.

Treasurer Neff said that she recommended to the bishop that the synod form an Investment Committee that would review the synod's investments and make recommendations to the Synod Council.

In response to some inquiries, Pastor Richard noted that the synod does have a plan for handling the proceeds that the synod receives from the church buildings that it sells.

Mr. Rothermel concluded that he is seeking a management letter from the auditing firm.

### **Report of the Finance Committee**

Pastor Richard reported that, because of a glitch in the accounting system last year, the synod did not send a portion of its partnership support to the ELCA as budgeted. As such, the synod is seeking to “make up” that support by sending regular additional payments throughout the current fiscal year.

### **MISSION MOMENT**

Vice President Beasley asked Synod Council members, “What spoke to you at the Synod Assembly?”

Among the responses that she received were the following:

- The skyped visit with the MacPhersons and praying the Lord’s Prayer simultaneously in different languages;
- “Amazing worship;”
- Ms. Beasley’s “engaging and heartfelt” presentation at her first assembly as Vice President;
- The communications provided by those involved with information technology;
- The outstanding job done by the worship team; and
- Opportunities for prayer.

Mr. Donald Gleiter requested that the assembly planners consider ways to encourage attendance at the forums.

The Reverend Regina Goodrich said that this year’s assembly was the best that she has attended because of its “spirituality and flow” and the “spiritual food” that it provided.

Mr. Rothermel observed that the assembly is “no longer a dreaded event.”

### **DESCRIPTION OF SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

At the request of Vice President Beasley, the appropriate chairs described the duties of the Administration, Audit, Finance, and Nominating Committees. Secretary Miller described the duties of the Executive and Nominating Committees.

## **ELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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 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 were Mr. Robert Hensil and Mr. Wynne Fisher. Synod Council members voted. Upon receiving the results of the voting, Vice President Beasley declared Mr. Hensil elected.

Nominated for the clergy position was Pastor Karl Richard. There were no additional nominations. Vice President Beasley declared Pastor Karl Richard elected.

## **REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE PLACEMENTS**

Vice President Beasley requested that Synod Council members indicate their preference for committee assignments by completing the form provided.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Pursch encouraged Synod Council members, as they begin a new program year, “to pray for each other and for our work together.”

The Synod Council adjourned at 8:35 p.m. Pastor Goodrich offered prayer.

The 131st meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is Thursday, September 25, 2014, 4:00 p.m., at a location to be announced.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller  
Secretary  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA