

**MINUTES**  
**Of the 127th MEETING**  
**Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**September 19, 2013**  
**Tabernacle Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, PA**

The Reverend Carlton Rodgers, Pastor, Tabernacle, Philadelphia, and Dean, Central Philadelphia Conference, welcomed Synod Council members and led devotions.

Vice President Tracey Beasley called to order the One Hundred Twenty-seventh Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:15 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 126th meeting of the Synod Council as corrected.

**SETTING OF THE AGENDA**

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the 127th meeting.

**BISHOP'S REPORT**

**50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania**

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, and Ms. Joanne Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Mission and Events, visited the North Eastern Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, June 11-25, 2013. She described the trip as “wonderful and challenging,” adding that it included meetings with other ELCA synod representatives and ELCA staff in Tanzania. One of the highlights of the trip was the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania.

**Reformation 500 Team**

Bishop Burkat reported that the Reformation 500 Team is making plans to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. The team has started a Facebook group, posted resources on the synod’s website, and is in the process of reviewing ideas for annual emphases over the next four years, including trips to Lutheran Reformation sites in Germany.

**Lutheran Charities**

Bishop Burkat reported that she and Vice President Beasley, along with eight key leaders from area Lutheran social ministry organizations, attended the first meeting of the Lutheran Charities Future Committee in July of this year. Those at the meeting participated in “a fruitful discussion” and formed a continuing task group. Bishop Burkat said that she hopes to have a

recommendation on the future of the Lutheran Charities Appeal for the December 2013 Synod Council meeting.

### **2013 Churchwide Assembly**

Describing the 2013 Churchwide Assembly, which met August 12-17 in Pittsburgh, PA, as “inspiring, challenging, and exhausting,” Bishop Burkat shared her observations. Gathering under the theme *Always Being Made New*, she noted, “That theme resonated and came to life throughout the week in ways that none of us could have anticipated. The most startling and exciting new thing that happened at the assembly was the election of a new Presiding Bishop.” She listed and offered brief comments on the assembly’s major actions:

- The election of the Reverend Elizabeth Eaton, Bishop, Northeastern Ohio Synod, as the new Presiding Bishop;
- The election of the Reverend William Chris Boerger, former Bishop, Northwest Washington Synod, as the new Secretary;
- Discussions related to changes in the health benefits plan;
- Approval of five-year, \$198 million fundraising campaign; and
- Approval of the social statement, “The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries.”

“I was blessed to serve with a diverse and dedicated group of clergy and lay people from our Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod,” Bishop Burkat concluded. “I was especially impressed with the energy and enthusiasm of our young adult members.”

### **Synod’s Legal Counsel**

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

**S. C. 13.09.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the appointment of Mr. John I. Gordon to serve as the Legal Counsel for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod until resignation or a successor is appointed.**

### **Bishop’s Convocation**

Bishop Burkat reported that the theme for the Bishop’s Convocation, scheduled to take place November 13-15, 2013, in Bethlehem, PA, is *Provocative Insight: The Art and Awe of Sharing the Gospel*. The speakers are the Reverend Dr. Alyce McKenzie and the Reverend Jay Gamelin.

### **LTSP Board of Trustees**

Noting that she serves on the Board of Trustees of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Bishop Burkat reported that she has been asked to serve on the search committee for a new seminary president.

### **Changes in the Business Office**

“Our finance department has experienced many challenges and changes over the past two years,” Bishop Burkat reported. “This summer it became clear that we needed to make changes once again to update this department in order to be current with Standard Accounting Practices and technology. It is necessary for the finance department to be led by someone with training and experience in accounting and finance in order to keep the administration of the business office running smoothly and efficiently.

“To that end,” she continued, “I decided to eliminate the position of Assistant to the Bishop for Finance and Development, which resulted in Ms. Carol Ann Murray’s termination of employment. Carol Ann was an enthusiastic supporter of our synod mission, a compassionate and caring colleague, and a team player during her time here. Her last day in the office was August 7, 2013.

“Ms. Judy Koenig, our synod bookkeeper, who served the synod in the finance office for 31 years, submitted her resignation, effective August 12, 2013. Judy was conscientious, dependable, caring and considerate to colleagues and stakeholders, and a faithful steward of the synod’s resources.

“[The synod’s Treasurer, Ms.] Janet Neff is working closely with our auditors to identify appropriate staffing requirements for the department. Janet and [the Director of Operations and Executive Assistant to the Bishop, Ms.] Yvonne Curtis have been working together on the day-to-day tasks, to keep the finance department moving forward, and to get a clear picture of the type of staffing assistance needed for the immediate future. [Mr.] Martin Schwab, LTSP Business Manager, has served as a consultant for our new financial operating system since February 2013, and now is providing support by preparing financial reports and other bookkeeping tasks as requested.”

### **“God’s Work, Our Hands” Sunday**

“We are a church that rolls up its sleeves and gets to work,” reported Bishop Burkat. “Across our synod [on the ELCA’s designated National Day of Service, Sunday, September 8, 2013], ELCA Lutherans rolled up their sleeves and got to work. Volunteers cleaned up parks, streets, and creeks, helped schools get ready for fall, ran programs for kids, did painting and construction for shelters and clinics, [and] packed thousands of meals.” She added that Mr. Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation and Communications, has been collecting stories from congregations.

### **Action on the Roster**

#### ***Call to Specialized Ministry***

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

**S. C. 13.09.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the call to the Rev. Dr. Jennifer Phelps Ollikainen as the Executive Director of Lutheran Congregational Services, beginning October 1, 2013.**

*Calls to Interim Ministry*

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

**S. C. 13.09.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Rev. Paul Richard Beck to interim ministry at Grace Lutheran Church in Pottstown, PA, beginning August 19, 2013, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Beck resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

**S. C. 13.09.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Rev. Bruce John Thorsen to interim ministry at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lansdowne, PA, beginning September 11, 2013, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Thorsen resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

*On Leave from Call Requests*

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

**S. C. 13.09.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to the Reverends Daryl Nelson, 2nd year, effective July 3, 2013; Jack A. Saarela, 1st year, effective July 16, 2013; and Paul J. Xander, 1<sup>st</sup> year, effective July 22, 2013.**

**Living Hope Campaign**

Bishop Burkat reviewed the case statement for the synod's proposed *Living Hope* campaign and noted the following: "We are launching the Living Hope Campaign to secure the proper resources so we, the people that are the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, can support our congregations and our leaders as we go through this epic transformation together. By 2017 we will raise \$5 million to equip leaders and congregations and launch new expressions of the church now and into the future.

"This campaign focuses on four priorities that are essential to the health and vitality of the Church in this changing world:

- Equipping our people,
- Accompanying our communities of faith,
- Providing sustainable funding for future mission, and
- Celebrating our interdependence as the ELCA.

These four components provide a solid base that will ensure our Synod continues to innovate and lead mission."

The funds raised would be allocated in the following way: Equipping God's People, \$500,000; Accompanying Communities of Faith, \$500,000; Funding for Future Mission, \$3.5 million; and Celebrating Our Interdependence as the ELCA, 10% of the gifts to the Living Hope campaign.

She indicated that she planned to appoint a development team and that the campaign would make use of the services of a fundraising firm.

After discussion, Mr. Rodman Rothermel presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

**S. C. 13.09.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms the "Living Hope Campaign: Case Statement, Draft 4" as presented and authorizes the Bishop of this synod and the appointed Development Team to select a fundraising firm and report to the Synod Council on its progress at the Synod Council meeting on December 12, 2013.**

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

Vice President Beasley reported that Mr. Fred Brown has resigned his position as a Synod Council lay member at large.

She also reported that Mr. Dan Scharnhorst, Executive Director of Bear Creek Camp, would make a presentation to the Synod Council at its meeting on December 12, 2013.

Vice President Beasley presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

**S. C. 13.09.07 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee and the Tanzania Companionship Team, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council designates March as *Tanzania Month* in 2014 and continuing for the next three years at which time it shall be subject to review.**

#### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

##### **Portico Benefits**

The Reverend Raymond Miller, Secretary, outlined the changes to the ELCA Health Benefits Plan, administered by Portico Benefit Services and approved by the ELCA Church Council at its meeting on August 11, 2013. The changes were developed by Portico in response to the legal requirements of the Affordable Care Act and include provision for offering to plan members four health plan benefit options: Platinum+, Gold+, Silver+, and Bronze+. He added that the ELCA Church Council at its meeting on August 11, 2013, took action to endorse the Gold+ option as the recommended option.

He presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council, after discussion, approved:

**S. C. 13.09.08 Whereas, at its meeting on August 11, 2013, the ELCA Church Council endorsed the Gold+ option among the four health plan options and pricing alternatives, offered by Portico Benefit Services in response to the health care reform provisions of the Affordable Care Act;**

**Whereas the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America recognizes that a commitment to comprehensive health care benefits is an investment in “the ministry we share;” and**

**Whereas the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod seeks to be an advocate for “plan members” in this synod as they seek to work with “sponsoring employers” in making equitable choices in regard to the health benefit options;**

**RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council joins the ELCA Church Council in “the endorsement of the Gold+ option as the benchmark and recommended health plan benefit option because it approximates the level of medical and dental benefits and expense allocation provided by the current ELCA Medical and Dental Benefits Plan;”**

**AND ALSO RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council directs the Office of the Bishop to communicate its endorsement of the Gold+ option to rostered leaders, congregations, and other related organizations, institutions, and agencies as soon as possible.**

## **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

### **Treasurer’s Report**

Ms. Neff reviewed the documents made available to Synod Council members: Statement of Financial Position, Income and Expense Statement, and Congregational Giving Statement, all as of July 31, 2013. She noted that, while partnership support from congregations was above what was expected as of July 31, 2013, cash flow is a concern.

She reported that an Occupancy Committee has been formed to consider options for the future location of the synod office.

### **Finance Committee**

The Reverend Christopher Weidner, Chair, reported that the committee has met by conference call and is in the process of regrouping.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **LTSP Board of Trustees Election**

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

**S. C. 13.09.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council elects the Reverend Harry McDowell and Ms. Patricia Robinson as members of the Board of Trustees of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia for terms ending 2016.**

### **LEARNING MOMENT**

As requested by those participating in the orientation session at the last Synod Council meeting, Secretary Miller presented a brief learning moment, explaining the three sections of the ELCA, synodical, and congregational constitutions (constitutional provisions, bylaws, and continuing resolutions) and the codification of these constitutions and Synod Assembly and Synod Council resolutions.

The Synod Council adjourned at 6:35 p.m. The Reverend Regina Goodrich offered prayer.

The 128th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is Thursday, December 12, 2013, 4:00 p.m., Upper Dublin Lutheran Church, Ambler.

The Reverend Raymond A. Miller  
Secretary  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod