

**MINUTES**  
**Of the 134th MEETING**  
**Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**April 16, 2015**  
**Reformation Lutheran Church, Media, PA**

The Reverend Wayne Matthias-Long, Pastor, Reformation, Media, welcomed Synod Council members and the Reverend Leslie Richard, Dean, Delaware Conference, led worship.

Ms. Tracey Beasley, Vice President, called to order the One Hundred Thirty-fourth Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:33 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 133rd meeting of the Synod Council as presented.

**SETTING OF THE AGENDA**

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the 134th meeting with two additions: the Global Mission Report and the Audit Report, both at the time of New Business. The Synod Council approved the agenda as presented with the two additions.

**BISHOP'S REPORT**

Bishop Burkat expressed her sympathy and support for Vice President Beasley on the recent deaths of her sister, Ms. Barbara Ann Segers, and her aunt, Ms. Dolores Clyburn.

**Thanks to Treasurer Janet Neff**

Noting that Ms. Janet Neff had been appointed to a second term as the Treasurer of this synod at the Synod Council meeting on February 19, 2015, the Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, expressed thanks to Ms. Neff for her willingness to serve.

**Thanks to Secretary Raymond Miller**

Bishop Burkat noted that the Reverend Raymond Miller has announced that he will not seek a fifth term as the Secretary of this synod at the assembly this year and is also completing a six-year term as a member of the ELCA's Church Council at the end of August. She reported that she and Vice President Beasley made a congratulatory video for Secretary Miller which was shown, along with those made by other synodical bishops for departing Church Council members, at the Church Council meeting this month. She thanked Secretary Miller for his service at the churchwide level and "for his remarkable and faithful attention to constitutional issues and recording of minutes as secretary on a synodical level." She invited Synod Council

members to attend a dinner in honor of Secretary Miller on May 15, 2015, at the Pine Crest Country Club, Lansdale.

### **Thanks to Synod Council Members**

Bishop expressed thanks to the following Synod Council members who are ineligible for re-election at this year's Synod Assembly: the Reverend Regina Goodrich and Ms. Margie Pendarvis-Wright. She also expressed thanks to the following Synod Council members who are eligible for re-election: the Reverends Tyler Rasmussen and William Rex, Mr. Henry Boyd, Mr. Robert Hensil, Sister Mary Julia McKenzie, Mr. Douglas Parry, and Ms. Susan Pursch.

### **Dissolving of the Synod's SEKOMU Coordinating Committee**

Bishop Burkat reported: "In the summer of 2005 a group from [this] synod traveled to the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania. There they heard of the diocesan dream of building a college on the territory of the diocese to offer degrees in special education and other professions that would serve people with special needs in Tanzania, a focus that had been woefully absent in the country. That fall the Reverend Dr. Anneth Munga, pastor, educator, and wife of Bishop Stephen Munga, visited [this] synod and requested the assistance of our synod as a partner in this dream. Bishop Roy Almquist and Ms. Joanne Carlson, Synod Staff for Global Vision, suggested that Ms. Susan Pursch lead the newly forming initiative."

The Synod Council subsequently approved a resolution "to form a committee to assist the North Eastern Diocese in their effort to develop and fund the anticipated new institution, the Sebastian Kolowa University College," known by the acronym SEKUCo (**S. C. 05.12.2**).

The synod's SEKUCo Coordinating Committee launched a fund raising campaign at the 2006 Synod Assembly and then raised \$475,000 over a period of nine years. "More than money," Bishop Burkat continued, "the resources of teachers, consultants, curriculum expertise, thousands of hours of communication across the globe, and several trips to Tanzania were priceless. Susan Pursch had the honor of being one of two graduation speakers at the first graduating class, the other being the retired Tanzanian President!

"[This year] 2015 marks a decade of the Coordinating Committee's dedication to our partnership with the North Eastern Diocese of Tanzania and especially [to] the great adventure in faith and transformational ministry that today is called SEKOMU [Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University]. The school is thriving as an accredited university, with an annual graduating class of 1,000 students! Dr. Anneth Munga serves as Vice Chancellor, and she and Bishop Munga send their gratitude and thanksgiving for the work of the SEKOMU Coordinating Committee, under the leadership of Susan Pursch.

"Susan's journey as leader of this remarkable partnership and the dedication and hard work of the Coordinating Committee has blessed the North Eastern Diocese, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, the ministry of higher education, [and] those with special needs in Tanzania, and has multiplied God's great purpose to heal and bless the world a thousand times over."

As an expression of thanks for the leadership that Ms. Susan Pursch has brought to the SEKOMU Coordinating Committee, Bishop Burkat invited Ms. Pursch to come forward and presented a framed “word cloud” to her.

### **Forward Together in Faith**

Bishop Burkat reported that Ms. Eileen Zuber began service as the *Forward Together in Faith* Campaign Coordinating Assistant in February of this year and noted four events planned for March and April of this year designed “to bring awareness to key leaders before [the] assembly.”

### **Conference of Bishops Meeting**

Bishop Burkat shared a printed summary of the actions taken by the Conference of Bishops at its meeting in March of this year.

### **Action on the Roster**

#### ***Conference of Bishops Extension Requests***

Bishop Burkat reported that the Conference of Bishops approved the requests for extension of *on leave from call* status for the Reverend Anita E. London, effective June 1, 2015, and the Reverend Gwendolyn S. King, effective October 1, 2015, based on **S. C. 15.02.01** and **S. C. 15.02.02**.

#### ***Renewal of Calls to Specialized Ministry***

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

**S. C. 15.04.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one-year term non-stipendiary call to Ms. Kathie Afflerbach to serve the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia as Coordinator for Non-Credit Education, effective June 7, 2015, and renewable on an annual basis.**

**S. C. 15.04.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves, in accord with bylaw 7.41.15. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, a call to serve as Spiritual Director in Unusual Circumstance to the Reverend Leslie M. Richard for a period of one year, effective June 1, 2015, and renewable on an annual basis.**

The Reverend Karl Richard abstained.

#### ***Call to Interim Ministry***

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

**S. C. 15.04.03 RESOLVED THAT, upon the recommendation of Bishop Claire S. Burkat, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council calls the Reverend Donna Wright to interim**

**ministry at Holy Trinity, Wallingford, starting May 26, 2015, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Wright resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

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

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

**S. C. 15.04.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to Sister Maggie Thorne, effective January 11, 2015, and to the Reverend Gerald W. Faust, 1<sup>st</sup> year, effective March 23, 2015.**

### ***Retirement Request***

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

**S. C. 15.04.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to the Reverend Dayle A. Malloy, effective May 1, 2015; the Reverend Jack A. Saarela, effective June 1, 2015; the Reverend Thomas E. Kadel, effective July 1, 2015; and the Reverend Nancy E. Wiseman, effective September 1, 2015.**

### ***Information Not Requiring Action: Transfer***

Bishop Burkat reported that Mr. Noah Hepler transferred *from* the North Carolina Synod, effective November 9, 2014; the Reverend L. George Detweiler transferred *to* the Metropolitan New York Synod, effective February 9, 2015; and Mr. Jay A. Mitchell resigned from the roster, effective February 24, 2015.

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

Vice President Beasley reviewed the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee on March 19, 2015, and April 8, 2015. She reported that Sister Mary Julia McKenzie has resigned as a member of the Synod Council. She invited Synod Council members to serve as pages or greeters at this year's Synod Assembly.

### **Nominees for Secretary**

Because the Synod Council serves as "the nominating committee" for the Office of the Secretary (S9.06.), the Executive Committee recommends that the Synod Council nominate the following five persons for the Office of Secretary at the 2015 Synod Assembly: Mr. Ken Brown, Ms. Pam Castellanos, the Reverend Karl Richard, the Reverend William Vanderslice, and the Reverend Donna Wright. The committee notes that the assembly may make floor nominations.

The Synod Council approved the following resolution:

**S. C. 15.04.06 RESOLVED THAT, in accordance with its responsibilities under S9.06. of the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania***

***Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Synod Council nominates the following persons for the Office of Secretary of this synod and recommends them for prayerful consideration by the 2015 Synod Assembly: Mr. Ken Brown, Ms. Pam Castellanos, the Reverend Karl Richard, the Reverend William Vanderslice, and the Reverend Donna Wright.***

At Bishop Burkat's request, Secretary Miller reviewed the process for electing the Secretary at the Synod Assembly.

### **Disbanding the SEKOMU Coordinating Committee**

With a recommendation for approval by the Executive Committee, Secretary Miller presented the following resolution:

- 1. Whereas the partnership between Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod and SEKOMU has been richly beneficial to all concerned;*
- 2. Whereas the nature of that partnership has evolved so that a committee within the synod devoted to that partnership is no longer needed;*
- 3. Whereas the partnership, though changing, ought to continue for the benefit of all concerned;*
- 4. Whereas the future of that partnership will be most effectively be nurtured in continuity with the past;*
- 5. Whereas Ms. Susan Pursch has been the leader of the synod's SEKOMU Committee, the prime mover of its accomplishments, a key initiator of many relationships between SEKOMU personnel and U. S. contacts, both in church and academic contexts, and is privy to countless details important to the future of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod/SEKOMU relationship; and*
- 6. Whereas members of the synod's SEKOMU Committee have shown great commitment to SEKOMU and the Synod's other partnerships with the Northeastern Diocese of the ELCT;*

### **S. C. 15.04.07 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

- 1. The Synod Council expresses sincere thanks and appreciation to Ms. Susan Pursch for her dedicated service to SEKOMU and to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's SEKOMU Committee.**
- 2. The Synod Council expresses sincere thanks and appreciation to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's SEKOMU Committee for their service to SEKOMU and to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's SEKOMU Committee.**
- 3. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's SEKOMU Committee be disbanded.**
- 4. The Committee's responsibilities for nurturing the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod/SEKOMU relationship be transferred to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod's Tanzania Committee.**
- 5. The funds designated for SEKOMU which have been under the SEKOMU Committee's stewardship be placed under the stewardship of the synod's Tanzania Committee.**

The Synod Council approved the resolution.

### **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Secretary Miller presented a brief summary of the actions taken by the ELCA Church Council at its meeting on April 9-12, 2015, in Chicago:

- The Church Council recommended continuing the work of developing a proposal to unify the three existing lay rosters into one Word and Service roster and to bring this proposal to the November 2015 meeting of the Church Council; and affirmed the Conference of Bishops' recommendation to delay a proposal on the appropriate entrance rite and related issues until the November 2018 meeting of the Church Council.
- The Church Council took several actions related to the recommendations of the [Presiding] Bishop's Think Tank on Mission Funding.
- The Church Council affirmed the pilot project being explored by the ELCA Mission Investment Fund to establish a Financial Services Organization.

Secretary Miller noted that his term, along with those of ten others, on the Church Council would end on August 31, 2015. The Church Council expressed its thanks to its departing members with a dinner, a video presentation, a party, and the presentation of a gift to each departing member.

## **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

On behalf of the Treasurer, Ms. Janet Neff, Pastor Karl Richard said that, since the synod's income and expenses reflect only two months of the current fiscal year, he is unable to report any significant trends.

## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Pastor Regina Goodrich presented the report of the Nominating Committee and expressed thanks to Secretary Miller for his assistance and support.

The Synod Council approved the following resolution:

**S. C. 15.04.08 RESOLVED THAT the Synod Council approves the nominating report as presented for consideration by the 2015 Synod Assembly.**

By approving this resolution, Secretary Miller indicated that the Nominating Committee would receive no further nominations. Synod Assembly voting members may make additional nominations on the floor of the assembly.

Secretary Miller also noted the need for additional nominees who are "persons of color and/or whose primary language is other than English," particularly for the synod's voting membership at the Churchwide Assembly.

## **MISSION MOMENT: UPDATE ON THE SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

Stating that she is very excited about the upcoming Synod Assembly, Bishop Burkat indicated that the focus of the assembly would be on the *Forward Together in Faith* campaign. She distributed information packets on the campaign to Synod Council members and reviewed the items contained in the packet.

Mr. Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation and Communications, described how funds generated by the campaign would enable new ways of networking and communication.

Bishop Burkat invited Synod Council members to make a commitment to the campaign and expressed a hope that every Synod Council member would do so before the opening of the Synod Assembly. She said that the three-year campaign seeks to raise \$2,500,000.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Report of the Interim Ministry Task Force**

In response to **S. A. 14.05.07**, Ms. Teri Lanan, Chair of the Resolution Task Force on Transition Ministry, reviewed *Part IV: Results* and *Part V: Recommendations* of the task force's report to the Synod Council, dated April 16, 2015. She asked for comments.

Synod Council members expressed concern over the task force's omission in seeking input from "multicultural and secular sources."

The Reverend Marcia Bell noted that the intentional interim ministry process has moved away from a "one size fits all" concept, seeking to adapt the process more closely to differing congregational situations. In response to concerns about the length of the interim process, she said that what often increases the interim period for congregations is the call process.

Ms. Lanan offered to provide a written report to the Synod Assembly.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Global Mission Report**

Ms. Joanne Carlson, Assistant to the Bishop for Global Vision and Events, reported that, in response to the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the synod's Tanzania Companionship Team sent a mailing to the synod's congregations, asking them to join in contributing to a special offering in support of the construction of Compassion House at SEKOMU.

She also asked that Synod Council members keep in prayer their brothers and sisters in Tanzania as they deal with increasing tensions related to the upcoming Tanzanian presidential election. Noting the mass slaughter of students in Kenya by Al-Shabaab this month, she explained that Tanzania has not faced the same threats of terrorist attack as its neighbor Kenya. She said that Kenya became a target of militants because it sent troops to Somalia.

### **Audit Report**

Mr. Rod Rothermel, Chair of the Audit Committee, reviewed drafts of the management and professional standards letters from Tait/Weller, Certified Public Accountants, addressed to the audit committee and dated April 2015. He read the following section of the management letter:

“The Synod has been producing operating deficits for several years which have been funded through withdrawals from the designated net asset accounts, in particular the Fund for Mission. These deficits have ranged from approximately \$1.3 million during the year ended January 31, 2008, decreasing to approximately \$272,000 (excluding the sale of church property) during the year ended January 31, 2015. As a result, the Fund for Mission has declined from approximately \$2.5 million as of January 31, 2008, to approximately \$800,000 as of January 31, 2015, after the transfer of the Church Renewal and Endowment net asset balance of approximately \$264,000. In addition, the Synod has limited additional undesignated unrestricted reserve balances of approximately \$231,000 to fund operating deficits going forward. As such, it is extremely important that the Synod operate within its available resources and not rely extensively on the infrequent sales of church properties.”

In response to the concerns raised by this letter, Mr. Rothermel urged the synod “to live within its means.” He said that the responsibility for doing this lies with the Synod Council, which must choose between “short-term satisfaction” and “long-term liability.”

Recognizing that Mr. Rothermel’s remarks represent the beginning of an important conversation, Bishop Burkat suggested that this conversation be held at another time when it is not rushed.

The Synod Council then saw the *Forward Together in Faith* video that will be shown at the Synod Assembly.

Wayne Matthias Long offered prayer. The Synod Council adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

The 135th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is Thursday, June 11, 2015, 4:00 p.m., at a location to be announced.

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