

MINUTES
Of the 132nd MEETING
Of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
Of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
December 11, 2014
St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Lafayette Hill, PA

The Reverend Bruce Todd, Pastor, St. Peter, Lafayette, 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 Thirty-second Meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council at 4:20 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 131st meeting of the Synod Council as presented.

SETTING OF THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the 132nd meeting.

BISHOP'S REPORT

The Reverend Claire Burkat, Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, invited Synod Council members to look at the list of her activities for September through December 2014, noting the fullness of her schedule.

Bishop's Convocation: Generations of Generosity

Bishop Burkat reported that, on November 12-14, 2014, under the theme "Generations of Generosity," the synod's rostered leaders and staff gathered in Bethlehem, PA, for the annual Bishop's Convocation. The 130 participants welcomed the presenters: the Reverend Dr. David Lose, President of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and the Reverend Renée LiaBraaten, formerly a Kairos consultant and a stewardship specialist. Joining the convocation were Bishop Stephen Munga and Pastor James Mwinuka, General Secretary, both of the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania (ELCT).

Bishop Munga and General Secretary Mwinuka's Visit

Bishop Burkat reported that General Secretary Mwinuka, who has administrative oversight for the North Eastern Diocese, spent two weeks on the territory of the synod, participating in a variety of learning, worshiping, and touring opportunities.

Though Bishop Munga's visit was shorter because of prior commitments, he and Bishop Burkat had several opportunities to talk privately about the development and strengthening of the

synod's and the diocese's partnership. Bishop Munga told Bishop Burkat that, when he comes here, he feels very much at home.

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

Bishop Burkat reported that 2014 has been a transitional year for the Philadelphia Seminary. She added that, since the announcement of and the arrival of President Lose on September 1, her involvement with the seminary has been a whirlwind of special events and meetings, among them, the 150th Anniversary Banquet at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel, Philadelphia, on November 16, and the installation of the new president at Advent Vespers hosted by Holy Communion, Philadelphia, on December 7. The ELCA's Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton was the keynote speaker at the 150th Anniversary Banquet and Bishop Burkat served as the Mistress of Ceremonies. She noted that "a renewed partnership with LTSP is beginning." She and President Lose hope to align their priorities for the synod's mission campaign with the ways in which the seminary needs to equip rostered leaders for public and parish leadership in the future.

Muhlenberg College Elects a New President

Bishop reported that, on December 5, at a special meeting, the Muhlenberg College's Board of Trustees elected Mr. John I. Williams, Jr., to serve as president of the college, beginning June 2015. She noted that Mr. Williams brings "an impressive vitae as an innovative and visionary leader with extensive experience in higher education."

Four Ordinations

Bishop Burkat said that she is pleased to report that she ordained four new pastors this fall: the Reverend Axel Kaegel, on September 27, at St. John, Spinnerstown, where he has been called as pastor; the Reverend Linda Manson, on November 22, at Holy Communion, Philadelphia, where she is the developer of the new mission, Living Gospel; the Reverend Laura Tancredi, called to St. Paul, Ardmore, and the Reverend Karen Sease, called to Grace, Pottstown, on December 6, at the Philadelphia seminary chapel.

Molly Beck Dean's Transition

Bishop Burkat reported that Ms. Molly Beck Dean, the synod's Assistant to the Bishop and Youth Ministry Specialist, has accepted a position as the Director of the ELCA Youth Gathering. "Molly's love for our young people, her attention to equipping adult leaders, [and] her creativity, courage, and her deep spirituality have touched thousands of young lives during her twelve plus years on synod staff," she said. "In her new role, Molly will be responsible for this extraordinary ELCA Youth Gathering that brings together nearly 40,000 young people, adults, and staff."

She added that, following tonight's meeting, Synod Council members will have the opportunity to say goodbye to Molly. The whole synod, especially youth ministry leaders from the various teams with which Molly has worked over the years, will gather for a party and a blessing of Molly and her family on Sunday, January 11, 2015, 3:00 p.m., at St. Luke, Devon.

Forward Together in Faith

Bishop Burkat reported that she has been working closely with Mr. Jeff Kjellberg on putting together the components and the teams necessary to do a public launch of the synod's campaign *Forward Together in Faith* at the 2015 Synod Assembly. She offered a summary of the teams needed for the planning and delivery of this campaign:

- **Vision Implementation Team.** Eight people reviewed the landscape executive report, in person and online, which led to the current components.
- **Donor Discussion.** The preliminary ideas for campaign components were shared with thirty synod donors in late September for feedback and input.
- **Leadership Team.** Six people agreed to serve and met for the first time on December 5.
- **Twenty-eight CAT Teams** (Church Assessment Teams) “from each of the conferences have agreed to do the *HolyCow!* instrument similar to the Landscape Study we took as a synod last spring. The first two meetings in November were invitations to participate in the CAT and the third was an informational session held on December 6 for those who will oversee the online assessment in each congregation. The instruments will conclude at the end of January so we have time to interpret the results for each congregation and the implications for the synod as a whole.”
- **Communications/Marketing Team** met twice on November 14 and December 5.
- **Lead Gift/Donor Development Team** is to be formed in January.
- **Synod Assembly Presentation** will be a combination of several teams coordinating their materials and insights.

Action on the Roster

Specialized Ministry Term Call: The Reverend Paul Xander

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

S. C. 14.12.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a three-year term call for the Reverend Paul Xander as Chaplain at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network in Allentown and Bethlehem, PA, effective December 11, 2014.

Term Call: The Reverend David Oppold

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

S. C. 14.12.02 RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a seven-month term call for the Reverend David Oppold to Trinity Lutheran Church, South Philadelphia, as pastor, effective December 11, 2014, through June 30, 2015.

Retirement Requests

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

S. C. 14.12.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to Sister Jane Roper, effective January 1, 2015; and to the Reverends David B. Christensen, effective January 1, 2015; Steven G. Jones, effective January 1, 2015; David Percy, effective December 1, 2014; and John Puotinen, effective January 1, 2015.

On Leave from Call Requests

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

S. C. 14.12.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to the Reverends Ellen Anderson, 1st year, effective December 15, 2014; Kristine Peterson, 1st year, effective July 14, 2014; and Bruce Thorsen, 1st year, effective September 15, 2014.

Conference of Bishops Report of On Leave from Call Extension Request

Bishop Burkat reported that the Conference of Bishops received the resolution **S. C. 14.09.08** at its meeting on October 2-7, 2014 and approved the Reverend Stacie Dougherty for a first two-year extension of *on leave from call* status, effective September 22, 2014, renewable by the Synod Council on an annual basis up to a maximum of two years.

Conference of Bishops Report – Removal from Roster

Bishop Burkat reported that the Conference of Bishops at its meeting on October 2-7, 2014, reviewed *on leave from call* periods beyond the maximum time allowed. The Reverend Priscila Curet's initial *on leave from call* status began on September 1, 2005. During that time she has not been able to secure a call. She has reached the maximum time allowed for *on leave from call* status and the Office of the Secretary, in consultation with Bishop Burkat, recommended to the Conference of Bishops her removal from the Roster of Ordained Ministers, effective October 4, 2014.

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

S. C. 14.12.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council removes the Reverend Priscila Curet from the Roster of Ordained Ministers, effective October 4, 2014.

Information Not Requiring Action: Transfer

Bishop Burkat reported that the Reverend Richard L. Moore transferred to the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, effective October 1, 2014.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Beasley asked for volunteers to take photos and compile resumes for the proposed Synod Council directory. She then asked if Synod Council members had any questions on the Executive Committee report.

Noting that, in the report, the bishop expressed concern over the number of “fragile congregations” in the synod, Ms. Susan Pursch asked Bishop Burkat, “What is your guess on the number of fragile congregations at this time?” Bishop Burkat said that presently there are ten, but she projected that, over the next five years, there might be twenty-five. She added that, with the Committee of Deans, she is exploring a variety of different models for congregational life in the future.

Concerned about the significant number of church buildings that the synod would be taking under management in the future, Ms. Pursch expressed thanks for those who are now managing and working to sell these properties but urged synod leadership to consider making use of a company and/or agency “to manage these former congregational properties for the synod and to aggressively sell them.”

Vice President indicated that the Executive Committee would further discuss this concern.

SECRETARY’S REPORT

Dissolution of the Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference

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

S. C. 14.12.06 Whereas the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council recognizes the vital and invaluable support that the Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference has provided to its member congregations since its formation in the year 1987 as part of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America;

Whereas the Synod Council expresses its deepest appreciation to those who have provided leadership for the conference since its formation, especially those who have served as deans of the conference;

Whereas the Synod Council acknowledges that, due to the diminishing number of congregations in a particular conference, the conference may need to dissolve and the synod may need to invite the congregations of that conference to request assignment to another conference;

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council dissolves the Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference, effective December 11, 2014, and invites the member congregations of the Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference to request reassignment to another conference. In compliance with S12.01.04. of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Synod Council shall approve all requests by

congregations of the Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference for reassignment to another conference. The deadline for congregations of the Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference to make such requests is February 15, 2015.

Sabbatical Policy Guidelines

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

S. C. 14.12.07 Whereas the Synod Assembly in 2014 has referred the document “Sabbaticals: Extended Study and Renewal, Guidelines for Implementation (April 2014)” to the Synod Council for review (S. A. 14.05.09);

Whereas the Synod Council has reviewed the document and is prepared to present it to the assembly in 2015 as requested by the assembly in 2014;

Whereas the Synod Council wholeheartedly recognizes the value and benefits of sabbaticals for all rostered leaders, especially those serving in congregations, organizations, or agencies with limited means; and

Whereas the Synod Council encourages congregations, organizations, or agencies with limited means to seek creative ways to provide sabbaticals to their rostered leaders, making use of their partnerships with other congregations, organizations, and/or agencies;

RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council strongly and without reservation recommends that the Synod Assembly in 2015 approve the document “Sabbaticals: Extended Study and Renewal, Guidelines for Implementation (April 2014)” as presented.

Sale of St. James, Chalfont

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

S. C. 14.12.08 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorizes the Reverend Claire Burkat, the bishop of this synod, to sign settlement papers for the sale of the property of St. James, Chalfont.

Revisions to Policies for Youth Workers for SEPA Synod Youth Ministry Events

The Synod Council discussed the proposed revisions to the document *Policies for Youth Workers for Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Youth Ministry Events*. After considering a number of different changes of wording in the first bulleted paragraph in the section labelled “General,” the Synod Council agreed to the following:

~~It is the state’s requirement that all adults, who are designated congregational youth leaders, complete national criminal/child abuse clearance checks. It is required that all adults who participate in a synodical overnight event complete such clearances~~ national criminal/child abuse clearance checks. A copy of these reports must be presented to the synod upon the group’s registration for an event. The synod is not responsible for any fees. ~~More information~~

~~on these preferred companies is available online at www.sepayouth.org.~~ All information received is confidential and will not be shared with others in the congregation or synod. A person needs to submit these forms only once, as long as their membership remains in the same congregation, as the forms will be filed at the synod office for future use. The synod does require, however, that clearances are redone every three years.

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

S. C. 14.12.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the proposed revisions to the document *Policies for Youth Workers for Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Youth Ministry Events*, noting the changes that it made to the first bulleted paragraph in the section labelled “General” at its meeting on December 11, 2014. The Synod Council recognizes that the changes made by the Synod Council are subject to the approval of the synod’s attorney.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Report of the Treasurer

Ms. Janet Huber Neff, Treasurer, presented the following report:

Partnership Support

“Partnership Support was under budget by \$152,000 in November. The stewardship team is making phone calls to make sure that churches will meet their intent or their previous year’s giving.

Business Office

“We are quite pleased with Senior Accountant, Mr. Martin Schwab, who is performing his tasks quite well and is an important part of the synod’s team of professionals. Before hiring Mr. Schwab, we had budgeted for a CFO on a part time basis. We do not feel that [this position] is necessary and we will be able to revise the 2015 budget.

Bequests

“Mission results showed expenses over income by \$154,426 and this includes a bequest of \$50,000 from the Hauenschild Trust. At year end, we will transfer funds from the *Fund for Mission* to balance the deficit.

Balance Sheet

“Unrestricted cash and investments minus liabilities are \$253,467. The ELCA liability is \$312,984. This is the balance of amount owed from the prior year, which is being reduced at \$50,000 per month.”

Investment Committee

After discussion on the proposed charter for the Investment Committee, Ms. Neff presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 14.12.10 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the charter of the Investment Committee with the following two revisions:

MEMBERSHIP:

The Investment Committee will consist of five ~~four~~ trustees, including the Treasurer and one member of Synod Council.

ORGANIZATION:

The Investment Committee shall hold regular semiannual meetings and shall meet more frequently as circumstances require. The Committee shall keep minutes of the meetings and provide semiannual reports to the Finance Committee of the Synod Council and to the Synod Council. The Chair, in consultation with other committee members, sets the agenda for and presides over the meeting. A quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Committee shall consist of a majority of the Committee members. ~~Decisions shall be made by a majority of those present at the meeting.~~ The trustees are expected to disclose any conflicts of interest.

Fund in Mission

Ms. Neff reported that the Fund for Mission Committee is currently in the process of developing a charter for the committee and guidelines for the use of the funds within the *Fund for Mission*.

MISSION MOMENT

Bishop Burkat reported, “We are now poised to reshape the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as a network that equips the saints, innovates ways of being church, and communicates what God is doing through us. The *Forward Together in Faith* Campaign will raise \$2.5 million over the next three years to help us live into this vision.”

She indicated that there is general agreement among those offering initial feedback for the campaign that the church needs to change. “Whatever form this change takes,” she added, “Jesus is leading.”

She reminded Synod Council members that the synod’s campaign includes a tithe to the ELCA’s *Always Being Made New* Campaign.

She noted that the vision of the synod’s campaign encompasses four key themes: *Forward Together as Networks*, *Forward Together as Equippers*, *Forward Together as Innovators*, and *Forward Together as Communicators*.

The Synod Council adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

The 133rd meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is Thursday, February 19, 2015, 4:00 p.m., at a location to be announced.

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

