

MINUTES
of the 135th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
June 9, 2015
St. David's Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, PA

The Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf, Pastor of St. David's, welcomed the members of the Synod Council. The Rev. Benjamin Krey, Dean of the Northeast Conference, presented an overview of the ministry of the Conference, and highlighted the addition of four new congregations since the dissolution of the Northwest Philadelphia/Olney Conference. The congregations new to the Northeast ("the Great Northeast") Conference are Tabor, Zion, St. Paul's and Reformation. Dean Krey then led the Council in devotions.

Ms Tracey Beasley, Vice President, had the members of the Synod Council introduce themselves, as there were new persons elected to serve, and some who were being presented to fill open seats. Welcome new members Ms Joyce Maloney of Trinity, South Philadelphia, and Mr. Henry Strobel of Trinity, Lansdale.

The Vice President then called the meeting to order at 4:45 pm.

APPROVAL OF PERSONS TO FILL OPEN SEATS ON THE SYNOD COUNCIL

Four persons were recommended by the Executive Committee to fill the four open seats on the Synod Council:

The Rev. Lyzette Rios Sanchez, New Creation, Philadelphia – term expiring 2018, Clergy
The Rev. Dwight Mason, Good Shepherd, Philadelphia – term expiring 2016, Clergy
Mr. Philip Tackett, St. Peter, Hilltown –term expiring 2018, Upper Bucks Lay Male
Mr. Amos Garsaynee, St. John, Folcroft –term expiring 2016, Lay Male at Large

The Synod Council approved these persons, and those present took their seats for the remainder of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 134th meeting of the Synod Council as presented.

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 28th Annual Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the 135th meeting.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Reflections on the Synod Assembly:

Forward Together in Faith

Bishop Claire Burkat expressed her pleasure that there has been 100% statement of support for the Forward Together in Faith appeal from the Synod Council prior to the Assembly. There has also been

100% statement of support from the Synod staff, and 100% statement of support from the Deans. Packets with pledge cards were provided to the new members of the Synod Council to give them the opportunity to express their support of this appeal as well.

Recognitions

Bishop Burkat noted the faithful service of Pr. Ray Miller as he completed his term as Secretary of the SEPA Synod. She was also pleased that we were able to surprise Ms Joanne Carlson with her family as part of the Synod's thank you to her on the occasion of her retirement from the Synod staff. It was also good to recognize Ms Susan Pursch and the team that helped build SEKOMU in the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. And it was wonderful to welcome home Tom and Sue MacPherson as their time as missionaries to the ELCT came to a conclusion.

First Collingdale

The Bishop noted that the legal issues related to the title of First Collingdale have been settled in the Synod's favor. The nursery school run by the purchaser of the parsonage, who had claimed ownership of the church property, will be removed from the site.

Discussion of the Assembly

Bishop Burkat opened the floor for members of the Council to discuss their impressions of the Assembly. She began by saying the lack of a Keynote Speaker seemed to be a successful way for the Voting Members to understand the purpose of Forward Together in Faith. Each of the four initiatives had its own time of emphasis in the course of the Assembly. She also noted that the awareness seems to be growing that we cannot do things as we used to, as staffing is down from how the Synod used to be run.

Discussion ensued over how we can move from last century thinking to this century approaches, and how we might be able to identify ways in which the smaller Synod staffing opens opportunities for new ways of including more congregational involvement in the mission we share. This is precisely the goal of the four initiatives of Forward Together in Faith.

Comments were made that many of the Synod committees are indeed doing just this type of work, trying to bring new thinking to their work. Since strategy and direction are generally the purview of the CEO and staff, perhaps as the Bishop discovers places that are still lacking attention she can make these areas known so Council can assist in filling the needs.

One area that can use assistance is the Congregational Connector role for the appeal. Ms Emily Fowler was able to share some information about this role, and encouraged all to consider if they might be willing to be a Congregational Connector.

A suggestion was made to add a link to the Forward Together in Faith appeal to the Synod web site to facilitate pledges and/or contributions.

Actions on the Roster

Retirement Requests

Secretary Richard presented the following resolutions, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 15.06.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to the Rev. Bruce T. Davis, effective June 1, 2015.

S. C. 15.06.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *retirement* status to the Rev. Esther Rajashekar, effective July 1, 2015.

On Leave from Call Requests:

Secretary Richard presented the following resolutions, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 15.06.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to the Rev. Steven G. Jones, 1st year, effective January 1, 2015.

S. C. 15.06.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to Ms Nancy Selinger, Diaconal Minister, 3rd year, effective June 9, 2015.

S. C. 15.06.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to Sister Mary Julia McKenzie, Deaconess, 3rd year, effective June 30, 2015.

S. C. 15.06.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants *on leave from call* status to Ms Suzanne M. Rigg, Diaconal Minister, 1st year, effective June 1, 2015.

Extension of Term Call

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

S. C. 15.06.07 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve a *term call extension* for the Rev. David Oppold to Trinity Lutheran Church, South Philadelphia as pastor through September 30th 2015.

Information Not Requiring Action: Transfer

Bishop Burkat reported that the Rev. Dr. Philip D. W. Krey has transferred from the New England Synod to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, effective June 1, 2015

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Beasley referred Synod Council members to the minutes of the Executive Committee of May 28, 2015. Referring to the Resolution on Solidarity with Persecuted Christians from the Synod Assembly, Ms Beasley asked for two Synod Council members who would agree to draft a statement to be posted on Ministry Link, and a prayer that congregations may use in worship, to address the concerns raised by the Assembly.

The Rev. Steve Keiser and Ms Joyce Adams agreed to draft a statement and submit it to the Executive Committee prior to posting.

Vice President Beasley introduced the gift list for Synod Council members to complete to assist the Bishop and the Vice President in placing members on Synod committees. She then shared who chairs each of the respective committees:

Finance – the Rev. Steve Keiser

Nominating – Ms Joyce Adams

Constitution – the Rev. Jane Marston
Audit – Mr. Rod Rothermal
Administration – Ms Doreen Kinzler
Investment – not yet selected

Vice President Beasley noted that we are one lay male short for the August 2016 Churchwide Assembly. She put forward Emanuel Alves, Holy Communion, Philadelphia as the candidate recommended by the Executive Committee.

The Synod Council approved Emanuel Alves as Lay Male Voting Member to the Churchwide Assembly.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Investment Committee

Secretary Richard noted that we had approved the duties and functions of the Investment Committee at the December 2014 meeting of the Synod Council. To comply with the Synod Constitution +S11.01, we need to adopt them as a continuing resolution of the Synod Constitution. To that end, he presented the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 15.06.08 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves by two-thirds vote the document *Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Investment Committee Duties and Functions* as a continuing resolution of this synod.

Messiah, Newtown Square

Secretary Richard proposed the following resolution regarding reception of the property of Messiah Lutheran, Newtown Square, upon its closure:

S. C. 15.06.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of Messiah Lutheran Church, Newtown Square, to close, effective May 31, 2015, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of Messiah, Newtown Square, in accordance with the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, specifically 9.71.b., +S13.23., and *C7.01.; and, on this date, June 9, 2015, authorizes the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, or the Bishop's representative(s), to sell the property on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Synod Council approved the resolution after the following discussion:

The Rev. Paul Sorcek asked if there has been any evaluation of the site and its value for a new or different mission prior to selling. Property is difficult to come by, and there may be a value to keeping, rather than automatically selling, some of these assets.

The Rev. Patricia Davenport, Assistant to the Bishop, said the Evangelical Outreach Team does evaluate the needs of the area, and does an assessment of the properties we have, but it is not a formal process.

Pastor Sorcek emphasized his sense that we need a formal strategy to consider and evaluate these properties for future mission.

Secretary Richard shared a recommendation from former Secretary Ray Miller that when we receive a property we, as soon as possible, invest in a title search to verify any issues we may have. This should help mitigate issues such as those we have had with the former First, Collingdale. The Synod Council agreed. Mr. Martin Schwab, Synod Senior Accountant, will pursue this.

Ms Susan Pursch noted that in the minutes of the Finance Committee there was discussion, but no recommendation, with regard to engaging professional realtors to assist with the sale of these properties. She strongly suggests we pursue this option so we can sell the properties in a more timely, and in the long run, potentially less costly manner than holding them and maintaining them on our own.

Grant Application

The Synod is in the process of filing for a grant from St. Andrew Lutheran, Audubon, PA to assist with Youth Ministry expenses. To do this, the Synod needs an authorized person to file the request. Secretary Richard brought forward the following resolution, which the Synod Council approved:

S. C. 15.06.10 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges that Martin Schwab of Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA is hereby authorized and directed to perform all acts necessary to properly complete and file an application for a grant of funds from St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran Church Endowment Fund on behalf of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA in an amount not to exceed \$10,000, and upon approval of said grant/funds request to carry out and comply with all the terms and conditions of said grant approval.

Compliance with new Pennsylvania Laws

In discussions regarding the new laws for child protection, it seems as though the Synod Council would be in compliance even as we have members who are under the age of 18. Still, it is recommended that those members who have background clearances share a copy of them with the Synod office, and that those who do not be asked to sign a form which describes this Synod's practices and procedures with regard to interaction with youth.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Report of the Finance Committee

Had been posted prior to the meeting, and was noted for members' consideration.

Report of the Treasurer

Ms Janet Huber Neff, treasurer, made the following comments on her report:

Currently we are doing fine. There is a slight deficit, but it is not a concern at this time.

Reports on giving are provided so members can check their congregation's support, and possibly that of the congregations in their Conference. Keeping aware allows us to keep current on our support before it becomes overwhelming.

Ms Neff reviewed the Balance sheet, particularly for the newer members of Synod Council, and pointed out that some funds that are used have been designated for particular purposes to assist in our ministry, e.g. there is a Candidacy Fund from which we use some money each year to supplement our budget.

Ms Neff also went into more detail about our "pre-paid rent" to the Seminary, which was included in her written report. She pointed out that in the future we will need to include rent in our budget, and that consideration is being made for this now. We are working on setting aside funds as though we were paying rent so that we have this in our practice, and so that there is a reserve for such expenses when they become a reality for us.

Ms Neff said that there has been consideration of the value of the space we are using at the Seminary, and while there are issues with the type of space that might be best for us, the square footage, the parking, and the security available to us at the Seminary is a very good value for our money.

Report of the Audit Committee

Mr. Rod Rothermal, chair of the Audit Committee, commented that we had a very positive audit this year, and there were no significant issues to be addressed from the financial reporting. He did note that he still feels a concern that we operate without deficits as we go into the future.

Ms Janet Neff commented that she heard many positive comments about the presentation of the budget and spending plan. It has been helpful to have an explanation of how and where we spend our money. This may encourage congregations to be more consistent in their support of our Synodical ministry.

The Rev. Jane Marston agreed, and asked if these summary statements could be made available, or more widely shared to encourage such support.

MISSION MOMENTS

Further reflection on the Synod Assembly

Vice President Beasley commented that the "Dan on the Street" segments were a fun and engaging way to present aspects of our initiatives.

Ms Doreen Kinzler enjoyed hearing from our own people about our ministry, rather than listening to a Keynote Speaker.

Pastor Jane Marston shared that she heard from some who missed the energy of a Keynote speaker.

Bishop Burkat liked the local sharing, while recognizing the extra work that made for the staff, particularly Bob Fisher and the communications team.

Mr. Robert Hensil noted that, while engaging, the presentations on the four initiatives all ran over time, as did the worship.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Election of the Executive Committee

Vice President Beasley led the process for the elections of the Executive Committee. In addition to the Bishop, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary, there is need for one Clergy, one Lay Male, and one Lay Female on the Committee.

For Clergy person the following names were put in nomination:

The Rev. William Rex
The Rev. Tyler Rasmussen
The Rev. Jane Marston

The Synod Council elected the Rev. Tyler Rasmussen to the Executive Committee.

For Lay Female the following names were put in nomination:

Ms Doreen Kinzler
Ms Joyce Adams
Ms Susan Pursch

The Synod Council elected Ms Joyce Adams to the Executive Committee.

For Lay Male the following names were put in nomination:

Mr. Robert Hensil
Mr. Rod Rothermal

The Synod Council elected Mr. Robert Hensil to the Executive Committee.

Report of the Constitution Committee

The Rev. Jane Marston shared a report from Mr. Karl Segletes, previous chair of the committee. She put forward the following resolutions, which the Synod Council approved:

S.C. 15.06.11 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the Constitution of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Narberth, PA.

S.C. 15.06.12 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the Constitution of Living Word Lutheran Church, Roslyn, PA.

Pastor Marston also shared that there is consideration of the constitution for St. Luke's Lutheran, Gilbertsville, but there are a few revisions for which the committee is waiting.

The Rev. Steve Keiser asked what happens if we do not accept a congregation's revisions to their constitutions, yet they do not make the necessary changes. Pastor Marston said this rarely happens, and when there are questions it generally needs some clear explanation as to what the Constitution Committee needs and why. If there is still not compliance there is still a legal tie to the ELCA, and there are provisions that continue regardless of the congregation's action.

LYO Board

Ms Emily Fowler reported that the LYO Board will meet Friday, June 12th. The Board is working to incorporate the initiatives of Forward Together in Faith into its operation. Members of the Board intend to go to speak at congregations throughout our Synod to tell their story, and to be Congregational Connectors.

Ms Fowler again encouraged members of this Council to consider being a Congregational Connector.

Other new Business

Youth Ministry Staff

The Rev. Steve Keiser asked about the progress on finding a new Youth Ministry staff person.

Bishop Burkat stated that she hopes to have the position for a new staff person who will have responsibility for Youth Ministry posted in July or August.

Papal Visit

Ms Susan Pursch asked what we might do, or be doing, to assist with the visit by Pope Francis.

Bishop Burkat shared that we have offered to assist in whatever ways are helpful, particularly providing host families for visiting persons. There is much complexity to this endeavor, including tremendous security issues. It is a Vatican led operation, not a Diocesan led effort, and so we may or may not have a role. But we have made the offer to help.

Trips to Tanzania and "Lutherland"

Ms Joanne Carlson, Synod Staff, asked for prayers for the North Eastern Diocese of the ELCT as they celebrate their 125th anniversary, and for Bishop Burkat and herself as they travel to the celebration. Bishop Burkat will be preaching at the event.

Bishop Burkat made the following motion, which was approved by the Synod Council:

S. C. 15.06.13 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council appoints The Rev. Patricia Davenport as Acting Bishop for the time of Bishop Burkat's trip to Tanzania.

The Rev. Paul Sorcek asked for prayers for those who will be travelling to Germany this month to visit the Luther sites.

Thank yous

Vice President Beasley thanked the Administrative Committee for their work on the Synod Assembly. She also thanked all the Synod Council members who were able to help with registration and as pages during the Assembly.

The Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm with prayer led by the Rev. Tyler Rasmussen.

The 136th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council is Tuesday, September 15, 2015, at a location to be announced.

The Reverend Karl M. Richard
Secretary
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA