

**MINUTES**  
**of the 136<sup>th</sup> MEETING**  
**of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL**  
**of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA**  
**September 15, 2015**  
**St. Mark Lutheran Church, Conshohocken, PA**

The Rev. Bryan Penman, pastor of St. Mark welcomed the Synod Council. Pr. Penman described the setting and ministry of St. Mark, including the large number of children and persons under thirty in his community and congregation. The Rev. Julie DeWerth, Dean of Lower Montgomery Conference and Pr. Penman led the Council in a devotion which focused on fears and dreams as a new school year begins.

Vice President Tracey Beasley called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 135<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Synod Council as presented.

**SETTING THE AGENDA**

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the 135<sup>th</sup> meeting with the following alterations: the Mission Moment will come at end of Bishop's Report; voting on changes to the roster will take place under the Secretary's Report; Constitution Committee will have a report under new business. Revised agenda approved.

**BISHOP'S REPORT**

Bishop Burkat began with prayer for various concerns: For healing and recovery for Pr. Tom Lang and Ms Emily Fowler; for Pr. Tyler Rasmussen's family as they mourn the death of his brother and for his sister-in-law and her child to whom she gave birth during a flood.

**Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult Ministry and Spiritual Formation**

Pr. Bradley Burke was introduced as the successful candidate for the position of Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult Ministry and Spiritual Formation. Pr. Burke has served for the past year with Lutheran Charities. He shared that this was not as good a fit for him as he hoped it might be. This was a development position, and he feels he is more suited for hands on work. His supervisor understands, and agrees with Brad's choice to move to a different venue for ministry.

Discussion ensued about Brad's passion, vision for the youth and young adult ministry over the next 5 years, his connection to the communities of color, some of the differences between what he will do vs what Molly Beck Dean has done, and concerns that he not be co-opted into a general clergy role, keeping him from being able to focus on his position as laid out in the description.

After many questions about youth and young adult ministry, he was asked about the Spiritual Formation portion of the position. Pr. Burke feels "spiritual formation" is a better term than faith formation, as faith formation seems to be seen by many as Sunday School. "Spiritual Formation is the umbrella under which all the youth/young adult ministry falls."

## **Zion Flourtown**

The Bishop referenced the issues of Zion Flourtown, and encouraged members of Synod Council to re-read this portion of her report.

Ms Susan Pursch asked, “How do we educate people about their responsibilities if their congregation is facing closing? Can we help the congregations know more about our partnership so there is not an animosity or suspicion of the Synod?”

Bishop Burkat shared that we work on sharing this as we go through the process. We have a team of three pastors to help congregations navigate closure from planning to congregational meetings to final service and legal dissolution. In some cases there is withholding of information, not congregational lack of knowledge.

## **Papal Visit**

Bishop Burkat has been asked to be part of the opening mass of the World Meeting of Families, and will be available as she is needed during the days of this event. She will be staying in center city. She will be writing some words of welcome and Christian unity.

The Bishop reminded congregations to be available and flexible if there are emergencies that need help from nearby congregations. See sheet from Pr. Jennifer Ollikainen and Julia Menso from Lutheran Charities to be aware of ways to help.

## **MISSION MOMENT**

Pr. Dee Emmert, Pr. Dana Heiserer, Ms Marie Kinzler-Hand and Ms Diane Conn were present to share the story of the new Northeast Philadelphia Collaborative Ministry.

The name of the collaborative ministry is “God’s Grace Lutheran Community.” It involves the congregations of Redemption, St. Petri-Hope, and St. John’s. There are other congregations that were part of the discussion, but which chose not to enter into the collaborative ministry at this time. There remains the possibility of others joining in the future.

In this collaboration there will be a sharing of staff and resources. Each congregation will be responsible for its own building, and will provide financial support for its share of the combined staffing in proportion to the “services received.” Each will have about same amount of staff coverage they currently have, but this will come from all 3 pastors in the collaboration. The clergy involved will be Pr. Emmert, Pr. Heiserer, and Pr. Tricia Neale, who is called to Feast of Justice ministry and will serve the cooperative in a contracted capacity.

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

Vice President Tracey Beasley stated that two emails went to Synod Council to find people willing to call congregations to recruit Congregational Connectors for the Forward Together in Faith Campaign. So far, no one has responded.

We are also looking for Ambassadors to assist the Congregational Connectors in telling the story of the Campaign. Any Synod Council people who can help are asked to respond to Vice President Beasley.

Congregational Connectors will be given a script and tool kit to aid them as they present the Campaign. Ambassadors for the Campaign will be available if there is need for deeper sharing or discussion. Connectors will go to their own congregations. Ambassadors will go to other congregations.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Secretary Richard thanked Director of Operations Yvonne Curtis and Cynta Outterbridge for their dedication and assistance in registering our Voting Members to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. We are blessed to have such faithful partners in the work of the Gospel!

### **Actions on the Roster:**

Secretary Richard presented the following actions on the Roster, all of which were approved unanimously:

#### *Call to Synod Staff:*

**S. C. 15.09.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the four year, renewable call of the Rev. Bradley R. Burke to the position of Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult Ministry and Spiritual Formation.**

**S. C. 15.09.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves that \$30,000 of Pr. Burke's compensation be designated as housing allowance.**

#### *Call to Specialized Ministry:*

**S. C. 15.09.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one year renewable term call for The Rev. Patricia G. Neale as Executive Director of Feast for Justice, effective October 1, 2015.**

#### *Call to Coalition and Cluster Ministry:*

**S. C. 15.09.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one year renewable term call for the Rev. Dee Emmert as pastor of God's Grace Lutheran Community.**

**S. C. 15.09.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one year renewable term call for the Rev. Dana Heiserer as pastor of God's Grace Lutheran Community.**

#### *Renewal of Specialized Call:*

**S. C. 15.09.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one year renewable term call for the Rev. Violet Little as Mission Developer at The Welcome Church, effective September 1, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.07 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one year renewable term call for the Rev. Linda Manson as Mission Developer at Living Gospel Ministries, effective November 1, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.08 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one year renewable term call for the Rev. Jonathan Shin as Mission Developer at Philadelphia Korean Ministry, effective October 1, 2015.**

*Renewal of Term Calls:*

**S. C. 15.09.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a one year renewable non-stipendiary term call for the Rev. Sozinho Alves as Workplace Pastor at JBC, Inc., Souderton, PA effective September 25, 2015.**

In order to avoid any actual conflict of interest or any appearance of a conflict of interest, Mr. Emmanuel Alves abstained.

**S. C. 15.09.10 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves a three year renewable term call for the Rev. Brian Cox as Chaplain at Wesley Enhanced Living in Pennypack Park effective November 1, 2015**

*Calls to Interim Ministry:*

**S. C. 15.09.11 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Shirley S. Guider to interim ministry at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church Kulpsville, PA effective June 1, 2015, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Guider resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

**S. C. 15.09.12 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Wayne Shelor to interim ministry at St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Red, PA effective August 2, 2015, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.**

*Resignation from the Ordained Roster:*

**S. C. 15.09.13 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the resignation from the Ordained Roster of Ms Annette M. Freese effective July 1, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.14 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approves the resignation from the Ordained Roster of Ms Anita E. London effective August 22, 2015.**

*Retirements:*

**S. C. 15.09.15 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants retirement status to the Rev. Steven G. Jones effective September 1, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.16 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants retirement status to the Rev. Edward A. Niederhiser effective October 1, 2015**

*On Leave from Call Requests:*

**S. C. 15.09.17 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Ellen Anderson for disability, effective February 15, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.18 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Wende Bleam, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, effective June 14, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.19 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Althea M. Tysk, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, effective July 1, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.20 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Marcia Bell, 1<sup>st</sup> year, effective August 1, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.21 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Bruce Thorsen, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, effective September 15, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.22 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Stacie Dougherty, 2<sup>nd</sup> year extension, effective September 22, 2015.**

**S. C. 15.09.23 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Gwendolyn King, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, family leave, effective October 1, 2015.**

*Information not requiring action:*

*Transfers:*

**The Rev. Robert F. Matthias to Lower Susquehanna Synod effective August 1, 2015**

**The Rev. Wayne Shelor from Metropolitan Washington D. C. Synod effective August 2, 2015**

**The Rev. Gordon E. Simmons to Delaware-Maryland Synod effective August 12, 2015**

**The Rev. Sarah C. Stobie from North/West Michigan Synod effective August 16, 2015**

*Death:*

**The Rev. James A. Daniels, June 5, 2015**

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Ms Janet Neff was not able to be present at this meeting. She submitted her written report prior to the meeting. Pr. Stephen Keiser referenced her report, and asked for comment.

Mr. Rod Rothermel highlighted the treasurer's concern that we are seeing an abnormality in the pattern of giving from congregations. He asked if we will make adjustments on our spending plan now, or wait until end of year when we are "in the soup."

Pr. Keiser stated that the Finance Committee is hoping the Stewardship Committee will be successful in follow-up with the congregations, like they were last year.

Synod Council encourages the Finance Committee to review expenses and make recommendations to the Synod Council regarding such cuts to the spending plan.

With respect to following up with congregations, Vice President Beasley stated that there is a need to thank people. We need to show up and tell people that they have done well, and that we are grateful.

Pr. Patricia Davenport concurred, stating “There is a Power in Presence.”

The Stewardship Team will be encouraged to develop a list to give to Vice President Beasley so she can coordinate visitors to congregations to thank them. The hope is that members of the Synod Council will be those visitors.

### **Affirmation of Calls**

Pr. Burke, Pr. Emmert and Pr. Heiserer, who had been excused from the meeting during the actions on the Roster, were readmitted to the meeting and informed of the unanimous affirmation of their calls.

### **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

Vice President Beasley shared the revised list of committee appointments, which she had distributed in a separate document.

The Audit Committee shared a report to the Council, in which Mr. Rod Rothermel, outgoing chair, made the following motion:

**S. C. 15.09.24 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council retain the services of Tait Weller Certified Public Accountants for the next financial audit of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. Approved unanimously.**

The Investment committee is looking for members. Mr. Rod Rothermel, newly appointed chair, has considered several persons, but each has had conflicts of interest. If any member of Synod Council knows of anyone with the appropriate skill set, please share the information with Bishop Burkat or Vice President Beasley.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

Resolution on Solidarity with persecuted Christians: Pr. Stephen Keiser and Ms Joyce Brown Adams will bring something forward for Executive Committee to review, and Synod Council to approve.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Constitution Committee recommends adoption of the following:

**S. C. 15.09.25 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the constitutions of Christ Lutheran, Kulpville and Christ’s Lutheran Church, Oreland. Approved unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

The 137<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be Thursday, December 10, 2015, 4:00 p.m., at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, King of Prussia, PA.

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