

MINUTES
of the 138th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
February 18, 2016
Trinity Lutheran Church, Lansdale, PA

The Synod Council was welcomed at 4:20 p.m. by Pr. Paul Lutz, Senior Pastor of Trinity Lansdale, who also led us in devotions for the day.

Devotions – Pr. Lutz is a Biblical Storyteller, and began with a telling of Jesus’ Baptism from Luke’s Gospel. Pr. Lutz then invited people to share the story of their baptism with one another in groups of two or three, and reflect on what it means to be a Child of God.

Vice President Tracey Beasley called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 137th meeting of the Synod Council were approved with one correction. Under the Executive Committee report V.P. Beasley noted that Ms Joyce Brown Adams had drafted the Resolution on Solidarity with Persecuted Christians on her own, not with other assistance. Secretary Richard made the change to the minutes.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the meeting, which was then adopted by the Synod Council.

BISHOP’S REPORT

New School for Theological Education

Bishop Burkat, who serves on Board of Trustees of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, shared that there are many things happening simultaneously as the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg move forward with the plan to close each school and form a new school. There are issues of administrative staffing, faculty requirements, accreditation, use or dispersal of properties, legal authorizations, and many other items which need to be configured prior to July 1, 2017. These are difficult but exciting decisions as we move into a new future of educating leaders for the Church. The Bishop encouraged the members of the Synod Council to sign up for email/text updates of the progress. The two presidents, Dr. David Lose and Dr. Michael Cooper-White, are trying to keep the process as open and forthright as possible.

Pr. Bryan Penman thanked the Bishop for her work with the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and the planning for the new school.

Forward Together in Faith update

This is the “year of the ask”

The Bishop and the Campaign team are reviewing their efforts so far, and are asking “What hasn’t worked?” so that the financial response can be more effective as we continue through the campaign.

One area that has not been working well is the Congregational Connectors. These Connectors are not moving forward with the “ask” to congregations. In some cases they haven’t felt they have the right materials. In other cases the Congregation Councils and pastors are not on board. In other cases the Connectors do not seem clear what their role is in relation to the leadership of their congregations.

Another area that needs clarification is congregational understanding of the Church Assessment Tool. Twenty-four congregations took the CAT. Many of these congregations have then asked “what do we do now?” We as the Synod office don’t have the answers, or the resources to provide all the evaluation for the congregations. This needs to become more of an internal conversation and application within the congregation, and a more collaborative process between congregations that have engaged the Assessment Tool.

The Church Assessment Tool itself is proving to be too “evangelical” in flavor and perspective for our context and understanding of ministry. Jeff Kjellberg, Principle Owner of Kairos Christian Resource Development, has re-written the tool to be more applicable to our ELCA context. It will be less linear, more metaphorical. The hope is this will make the findings from the Assessment easier to grasp and implement.

In addition, “Navigators” are being gathered and trained to work with the congregations to walk through the assessment, helping to guide them and keep them on track.

The idea of the Bishop calling pastors to make congregational pledges has not worked. There is not enough time for it to happen, and not enough Lay presence to make it efficient. The new plan is to have lunches with the pastors of 30 – 50 congregations that are already supportive to present to them the Campaign and a suggested target to for their congregations to consider.

The Bishop is also giving a Forward Together in Faith presentation to Conferences that are electing Deans. Recently this included Lower Bucks and Chester Conferences.

Bishop Burkat is asking the Synod Council for names of people who would be good candidates to invite to a donor dinner. She distributed papers on which members can write the contact information for such persons and return it to her at the Synod office.

She asked that the Synod Council please invite officers of their Congregation Council to the leadership workshop in March, where more information will be shared with them.

She also is asking all members of Synod Council, the Staff, and the Deans to make a gift or pledge to the Campaign by the Synod Assembly. Regardless of the size of the gift, she would like to report that all of these leaders are on board with the Campaign.

Bishop Burkat then opened the floor for comment and questions.

Mr. Phil Tackett said his congregation is asking for clarification of what the money will be used for.

Mr. Bob Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Communications, mentioned some of the resources on the web site can help describe the intended use.

Ms Doreen Kinzler stated “our connectors have not shared the news with the congregation.”

Mr. Rod Rothermel stated he feels we should have 1 or 2 people go to the congregations and share what it is the Synod does and the Church at Large does. As we share the story people will be more inclined to give.

Ms Janet Neff, Synod Treasurer, shared that not everyone is at the Synod Assembly, but the PowerPoint presentation on the budget and work of the Synod was found to be helpful to summarize what we do in ministry, i.e., where the money goes.

Pr. Patricia Davenport, Director of Evangelical Mission said that when serving on different boards, such as Lutheran Services in America, you want to contribute to the cause. One thing we can do is to offer a “Jeffersonian dinner” where you sit down with people, tell the story, and have the group make an offering to the cause.

Pr. Jane Marston said “Description is good, but where we go from here, how we can help, should be clarified.”

Ms Susan Pursch “It is good we are working with congregations to help them identify issues. But let’s not fall back into seeming like we are doing this for them.”

Mr. Rothermel reiterated the need to make this ask personal. “When we meet with them and share what the mission is personally, then they get excited.”

Properties under management

First, Collingdale

Even though the Court has ruled consistently in our favor, the person who claimed rights to the property still won’t move. There are Liens on other properties she owns, yet she still refuses to move. An agreement has been made with her that she will have four months longer to vacate the property. This agreement is in writing, and in this document she has agreed that there will not be any further appeals. By the end of May she must be out, and we can then move forward with efforts to sell the property.

Redeemer, East Falls

There is an Agreement of Sale with a developer who wants to use the site to construct apartments. Closing is scheduled for the end of February.

Messiah, Newtown Square

A Korean Catholic congregation is set to take possession. The Archdiocese needs to take action to complete the transaction. With the coming of Pope Francis everything regarding this process slowed significantly. Now that the Pontifical visit is over, the hope is the Diocese will move forward so this sale can be completed.

St. John's, Pottstown

A Mennonite church is interested, but the building is in a flood zone. This will likely affect the sale price.

Domestic Synod Partnership

Flint, Michigan is on the territory of the Southeast Michigan Synod, with whom we are partners. We have posted on MinistryLink an appeal to help the people of Flint in this time of crisis, as lead levels in their water are dangerously high. Please encourage your members and congregations to support as they are able.

Desecration of Philadelphia Mosque

Following up on last meeting's information regarding the desecration of the Al-Aqsa Islamic Society mosque, Bishop Burkat shared she has written letters to seven local Imams. Lutherans are known in the City as being proactive and supportive. The Islamic community is very grateful for this support.

Racial Justice

Bishop Burkat spoke to the ongoing need to address issues of racial injustice and intolerance. She noted that several initiatives have been started in the ELCA, and in our Synod. We need to be proactive addressing issues of race and inequality.

Pr. Davenport expressed her gratitude to God for our Bishop who is such an ally in this venture. She stated that attention to this issue is not happening in every Synod. The Racial Justice team is being re-invigorated. They want to have fresh training in anti-racism for the Staff, the Synod Council, and the Deans. They plan to bring information to the Conferences to increase understanding and awareness, so that positive change can result. Persons of color are learning how to deal with "Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome." We all need to be aware of how deep the pain is, and how profoundly racism permeates all we do as a society.

Actions on Roster

Secretary Richard presented the following actions on the roster.

On leave from call requests:

S. C. 16.02.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council endorses an extension for On Leave from Call for Graduate Study status to the Rev. Margaret Ainslie effective June 1, 2016.

And BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council requests an approval of this extension from the ELCA Conference of Bishops Roster Committee.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

S. C. 16.02.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status to the Rev. Susan Kay Folks, second year, effective January 7, 2016.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Calls to Interim Ministry:

S.C. 16.02.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Marcia Bell to interim ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church Perkasie, PA beginning January 3, 2016, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Bell resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

S.C. 16.02.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Katherine Cartwright Knodel to interim ministry at St. David's Lutheran Church Philadelphia, PA beginning February 1, 2016, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Knodel resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Retirement Request:

S. C. 16.02.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants retirement status The Rev. Kevin Hilgendorf, effective December 1, 2015.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Information not requiring action:

Transfers

The Rev. Stacie Dougherty *to* Rocky Mountain Synod effective June 14, 2015

The Rev. Daniel Whitener *from* New Jersey Synod effective January 15, 2016

Removal from the ELCA Roster

Ms Nancy Selinger from the Roster of Diaconal Ministers of the ELCA

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Beasley thanked all the committees for the work they are doing. As the Synod Assembly approaches the various teams have been faithful in their service.

Continuing on the Bishop's reflections regarding racial justice and awareness, Vice President Beasley shared the following:

I was visiting our ELCA headquarters in Chicago about three weeks ago representing the African Descent Lutheran Association along with six others and representatives from our other Ethnic Specific and Multicultural ministries. About twenty-five people attended this gathering under the direction of the Rev. Albert Star, director for Ethnic Specific and Multicultural Ministries. In the course of the meetings that weekend, and in meeting with some key leaders of the ELCA, the team discovered that the focus on

representation from Multicultural Ministries on the ELCA Church Council had fallen away. That weekend the team drafted a letter so that “we” can be back at the table, and now “we” are. Now sitting at the table on the African Descent Strategy team I am helping to address issues of such in our Church.

Vice President Beasley noted she is one of only four of the sixty-five Synod Vice Presidents who is a person of color.

Ms Beasley shared that there will be an event called the Grace gathering overlapping with the Churchwide Assembly for persons who are not Voting Members of the CWA. Grace gathering – August 10-13 New Orleans – Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation – people can go to the ELCA website for more information.

SECRETARY’S REPORT

Secretary Karl Richard referred the Synod Council to his written report which contained three resolutions for the Council to consider. The first was needed to authorize a representative of the Synod to apply for grant money from the Endowment Fund of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Audubon, PA.

Secretary Richard put forward the following resolution:

S.C. 16.02.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges the Rev. Bradley R. Burke 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 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 of the terms and conditions of said grant approval.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

The second resolution was to give formal recognition of the closing of Zion Lutheran, Flourtown, and to offer thanks for 197 years of ministry to the Gospel of Christ.

Secretary Richard put forward the following resolution:

S.C. 16.02.07 RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council gives thanks to Almighty God for the faithful ministry of Zion Lutheran Church of Flourtown for the past 197 years, recognizes the end of Zion’s ministry as a congregation as of August 30, 2015, commends its leaders and people for their service to the Gospel, and encourages the members of Zion to seek new homes within the many ELCA congregations in the area.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

The third resolution was to recognize the ending of the ministry of St. Philip’s Deaf Church, N.E. Philadelphia, and to offer affirmation and support for its merger with Christ the King Deaf Church, West Chester, PA.

Secretary Richard put forward the following resolution:

S.C. 16.02.08 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges, with thanksgiving to Almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful ministry of St. Philip's Deaf Church for the past 89 years, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council receives the notification that St. Philip's Deaf Church ends its independent ministry as of December 31, 2015, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council affirms with joy the merger of St. Philip's Deaf Church with Christ the King Deaf Church so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ may continue to be faithfully proclaimed to the Deaf community in Philadelphia and beyond, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council pledges its ongoing prayer support of the work and witness of this merged ministry as it moves into the future in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Secretary Richard expressed his thanks to Pr. Patricia Davenport for her diligence and faithfulness in assisting these congregations as they walked through the process to become one ministry.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms Janet Neff, Treasurer, shared information from her memorandum to the Synod Council. A significant portion of our current shortfall is due to investment losses. We budgeted based on last year's gains. Not only have we had no gain this year, we actually had losses. For 2017 we are not budgeting for either gain or loss.

Partnership support from congregations is down \$130,000.

Pr. Jane Marston asked if we have any sense if there is a trend downward from congregations.

Ms Neff responded that we don't know. The Stewardship Committee has the role to investigate these questions. There are many congregations behind, but then there are several congregations that gave more than they gave before.

Ms Susan Pursch asked to whom does the Stewardship report? How does it make report to the Synod Council, and how do we send information or questions back to the Stewardship Committee?

Pr. Davenport replied that Pr. Larry Smoose is chair. He reports to the Bishop and Pr. Davenport.

Ms Pursch asked if we can have a written report from the Stewardship Committee.

Ms Neff shared that the Stewardship Committee did work to get responses by year-end, but even so we are behind.

Bishop Burkat commented that for the first time in many years several congregations are adding staff. This added expense has an impact on Synodical support.

Vice President Beasley stated we will ask Pr. Smoose for a written report, and will invite him to attend the next meeting of the Synod Council to present the Mission Moment.

Treasurer Neff noted that expenses related to the closed churches for which we have responsibility still have a large impact on our financial health.

We have renegotiated the Synod's insurance policies and saved money there.

In many categories we are not exceeding, but indeed are under budget. No salary increases are projected for 2017. One thing of which we should be aware: we have a large delay in our budget plan because of how far forward we need to work.

There were some areas of loss last year, e.g. Assembly and Youth events. We are assessing expenses so we can set fees accordingly. We want to receive enough funds to cover the cost of these activities.

At end of report there are records of transfers from restricted funds to bring the budget into balance. This is an appropriate action, as this is why the restricted funds exist.

Ms Pursch inquired as to how many additional churches are on the market. How many are we still funding?

Ms Neff referred to the list in the Bishop's report: Collingdale, Newtown Square, Redeemer, Pottstown, plus the Chalfont cemetery.

Treasurer Neff put the 2017 budget before the Synod Council for consideration:

S.C. 16.02.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council receive the proposed 2017 Budget from the Finance Committee, present it to the Synod Assembly on May 6th, 2016, and recommend its adoption by the Synod Assembly.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Ms Neff stated that we need to be aware that our lease with the Seminary ends in 3 years, just after next bishop is elected. She also shared that we are in a good position overall. We have some liabilities, but overall we are in good shape.

Ms Neff encouraged the Synod Council to review the progress of the Forward Together in Faith Campaign on the last page of her memorandum.

Vice President Beasley thanked the Treasurer, the Finance Committee and the Staff for all their hard work in this process.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Administration Committee

Ms Doreen Kinzler, Committee Chair, presented the proposed agenda for the May 2016 Synod Assembly to the Synod Council:

S.C. 16.02.10 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the agenda for the twenty-ninth Annual Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly, May 6 – 7, 2016

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Ms Kinzler shared that we will need help again this year with registration, and will need people to serve as pages at the Assembly. Members of the Synod Council, or members from their congregations, are asked to help with these tasks.

Constitution Committee

Pr. Jane Marston, Committee Chair, referenced her written report. A question was raised by Augustus Lutheran, Trappe, PA regarding consistency in the use of the terms “this congregation” and “the congregation” throughout the Model Constitution, including in some required provisions. After consultation with ELCA Secretary Boerger, and with his concurrence, the following resolution is proposed:

S.C. 16.02.11 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council, with the consent of the Secretary of this Church, grants permission to Augustus Lutheran, Trappe PA to alter required provisions in the Model Constitution to make consistent use of the term “this congregation” as referenced in Section C1.02 of the Model Constitution.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Pr. Marston then brought forward the constitutions of two congregations with the committee’s recommendation that the Synod Council approve them both.

S.C. 16.02.12 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the Congregational Constitution for St. John Lutheran Church, Centre Square, PA.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

S.C. 16.02.13 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the Congregational Constitution for Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Northeast Philadelphia, PA

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Nominating Committee

Ms Joyce Brown Adams, Committee Chair, thanked the committee for their hard work. She also expressed her thanks to Director of Operations Yvonne Curtis, Ms Cynta Outterbridge, and Secretary Karl Richard for their work on revising form and coordinating it with that of the ELCA forms. She also thanked Pr. Brad Burke, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth and Young Adult Ministry for his assistance in recruiting nominees.

Ms Adams referenced her report pointing out status of slates still needing nominees.

In addition to those listed in her report, Mr. John Ungerman is willing to run for Lay Male at Large.

We are nearly complete in our needed nominations. The Committee is extending deadline to 2/29 with the anticipation that the remaining slots will have nominees by then.

Audit Committee

Ms Susan Pursch, Committee Chair, stated that there is not a report this meeting but there should be a preliminary audit report for the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Vice President Beasley requested that members who are not able to attend inform her, or Secretary Richard of their absence. Director of Operations Yvonne Curtis has enough on her plate the day of our meeting without adding this detail to the list.

Ms Beasley also informed members of the Synod Council that if they are attending the Synod Assembly and are not a Voting Member from their congregation they do NOT need to pay. However such Synod Council members DO need to register.

NEW BUSINESS

Pr. Brad Burke, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult Ministry and Spiritual Formation shared a paper with his Goals and Initial Visions for Young Adult Ministry with the Synod Council. Pr. Burke shared that he has had many conversations with young adults across the Synod, including Synod Council member Ms Adrienne Nash-Menendez and Pr. Nate Preissinger of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia's admission office. The purpose of these conversations was to gather thoughts for how we might broaden the impact we have in Young Adult Ministry. These conversations helped inform the goals and visions he shared with the Council.

A very large piece of the ministry we do with and for Young Adults is the South Dakota Service trip. Pr. Burke asked Ms Nash-Menendez to describe some of this event. She shared that while this trip has been a part of our Youth Ministry, over the years there have been increasing numbers of Young Adults who have been participating. We are now trying to make this Young Adult connection a specific part of the trip.

The theme of the trip this year is "Faith on the Frontier." This would include the frontier of our lives, of social justice issues. There are several teams that are needed for this trip which would involve Young Adults. There are devotional teams, work teams, and van teams (there is a lot of driving). Exposure to different culture is a huge part of the experience. Rosebud Reservation of the Lakota tribe is the second poorest county in the entire nation.

This trip is a very powerful experience, but it is not cheap. The short-fall for the cost of trip is around \$10,000. There are two ways the team is proposing for people and congregations to help:

The first of these is "South Dakota Sunday," April 24th.

We are asking each congregation to consider using this day as a time to support Young Adult Ministry in Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod. The day will raise awareness of Young Adult Ministry in our Synod, and if each congregation can donate \$50 - \$100, it will go a long way for the South Dakota trip and Young Adult Ministry in general.

The second way to help is to support Lutheran Night at the Phillies on Friday, June 3rd. Where proceeds from this event have gone to Youth Ministry in the past, this year we will use them to support the South Dakota Trip.

Ms Joyce Brown Adams shared that the African Descent Lutheran Association is willing to make a contribution to this cause.

MISSION MOMENT

Due to the lateness of the hour, the Mission Moment about the New School will be shared over dinner.

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 with prayer by Pr. Paul Sorcek, newly elected Dean of the Lower Bucks Conference.

The 139th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be Thursday, April 21, 2016, 4:00 p.m., at a location to be announced.

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

Approved by Synod Council April 21, 2016