

MINUTES
of the 139th MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
April 21, 2016
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ardmore, PA

The Synod Council was welcomed at 4:08 PM by Pr. Harry "Skip" McDowell and Pr. Laura Tancredi of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Ardmore.

Pr. Leslie Richard, Dean of the Delaware Conference, led the Council in devotions.

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the meeting to order at 4:21 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the 138th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council were approved as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley presented the agenda for the meeting. An addition was made to include a report of the Investment Committee. The agenda was then adopted as amended by the Synod Council.

BISHOP'S REPORT

The Bishop referenced her written report to the Synod Council, and highlighted the following:

Award Received

Bishop Burkat shared that Mr. Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation and Communications, was recognized by Religion Communicators Council, which conveyed to him the DeRose-Hinkhouse Award for Communications Excellence. The award was given for the video Mr. Fisher produced describing and promoting Living Gospel Ministries. The Synod Council responded with applause for Bob and his staff.

Recognition of Synod Council Members

The Bishop thanked those members of the Synod Council whose terms come to an end at the upcoming Synod Assembly. She expressed her appreciation for those who will not be continuing on the Council, including: Ms Emily Fowler, Ms Adrienne Nash-Meledez, and Sister Jane Roper.

Bishop Burkat also thanked those who are allowing their names to be considered for second term, including: Pastor Sarah Anderson-Rajarigam, Pastor Dwight Mason, Mr. Emanuel Alves, Ms Joyce Brown Adams, Mr. Amos Garsaynee, Ms. Doreen Kinzler and Mr. John Ungerman.

Reflections from the Conference of Bishops

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton is planning to have a Rostered Leaders Gathering in August 2017 in Atlanta GA. There has been growing interest in having such a gathering, and it is being planned for August 7 – 10. More details will be shared in the fall.

The new venture between the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg generated a significant amount of discussion. As the Theological Education Advisory Council report has illustrated, there is a need to do something to save costs and be more efficient for training future leaders of the church. The very bold steps being taken by these two seminaries generated a great deal of hope, as well as a sense of loss. But all involved recognized that continuing along the same path we have been following is not sustainable.

Congregation Council Officers Meeting

The annual gathering of lay leaders from the congregations of our Synod was very positive and affirming. 100 leaders from 41 of our congregations attended. There was a good variety of congregations represented, from urban to suburban to small towns. Bishop Burkat was able to share the story of the Forward Together in Faith campaign with them, and it was well received by those present.

Lutheran Children and Family Services

This longstanding ministry has decided to shut down much of their work, particularly that related to refugee resettlement and adoption services. This was due to two very large contracts which were not renewed, funding from the state drying up due to the budget impasse, and dwindling support from donors. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services is now working with Bethany Christian Services to pick up the role that LCFS is no longer able to perform.

Ms Susan Pursch raised the question of our responsibility for this ministry. In what ways does the Synod pick up this work, and to what degree do the Social Service agencies work independently of our Synod?

Secretary Richard pointed out that we are separate entities constitutionally and structurally. While many of the Social Service agencies have their roots in our Lutheran congregations, or even to some degree in our Synod, they are now independent organizations. While they still have a Lutheran identity, many of the persons on their governing boards are Lutheran, and we as a Synod place a person on their boards, we do so according to the agency's constitution. Over time the way in which these ministries have been able to operate has necessitated them to rely most heavily on grants and government funding. A very small portion of their funding comes from the Synod or the congregations of the Synod.

Ms Pursch asked us all to please pray for these staff people in their time of uncertainty.

Professor from our Synod

Bishop Burkat shared the exciting news that The Rev. Dr. Leah Shade is now a member of the faculty at Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky. Dr. Shade had come through our candidacy process, and served in our Synod alongside Pr. Larry Smoose at Reformation Lutheran Church, Media.

Sabbatical for Pastor Patricia Davenport, D.E.M.

After serving our Synod faithfully for 40 years in various capacities, lay and ordained, from Synod Support Staff, to Parish Pastor at Spirit and Truth in Yeadon, and currently as Director of Evangelical Mission, Pr. Patricia Davenport will be on sabbatical from June 1, 2016 through September 1, 2016. On this sabbatical she will take time for reading and retreating. She will be reconnecting with women of faith across the country and in her own family. She will be about renewal through pottery class and dance. In all things she will look to be refreshed in the Spirit of the Living God who has led her and so many women of faith along the way.

The Synod Council wishes her a blessed and refreshing time in these coming months.

Actions on the roster

Secretary Richard presented the following actions on the roster

Call to Specialized Ministry:

S. C. 16.04.01 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve a one year term call to the Rev. William Rex as Port Chaplain effective May 1, 2016, renewable on an annual basis.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Renewal of call to Specialized Ministry:

S. C. 16.04.02 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council renew, in accord with bylaw 7.41.15., in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a call as Spiritual Director to the Rev. Leslie M. Richard under Unusual Circumstance for a period of one year effective June 1, 2016, renewable on an annual basis.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution. Secretary Richard abstained, as this involved his wife.

S. C. 16.04.03 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council renew 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, 2016 for a period of one year, renewable on an annual basis.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Call to Interim Ministry:

S. C. 16.04.04 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Elaine Quincey to interim ministry at St. Peter's Lutheran Church Riegelsville, PA beginning February 22, 2016, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Quincey resigns this call, whichever comes first.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

On leave from call request:

S. C. 16.04.05 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants on leave from call status for graduate study to the Rev. Margaret Ainslie effective June 30, 2016.

Related information: Conference of Bishops Extension Approval:

CB16.03.01 The Conference of Bishop approved an on leave extension for Pastor Margaret Ainslie as provided in bylaw 7.31.16.d in the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, extension of on-leave-from-call status, renewable by the Synod Council on an annual basis up to a maximum of two years.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Retirement Request:

S. C. 16.04.06 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants retirement status to the Rev. Peter Naschke effective March 1, 2016

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

S. C. 16.04.07 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants retirement status to the Rev. Marjorie Neale effective May 1, 2016

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

S. C. 16.04.08 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants retirement status to the Rev. Stephen Godsall-Myers effective July 1, 2016

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

Information not requiring action:

Transfer:

The Rev. Paul Hagedorn (Retired) from Metro New York Synod, effective March 17, 2016

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley thanked the members of the Synod Council for their service this year. She also thanked the members of the Executive Committee for their service over the past year.

Vice President Beasley shared that she had the opportunity to present the Forward Together in Faith campaign with Pr. Brad Burke describing where are we going, and why are we asking for money.

Bishop Burkat shared that our Vice President is a candidate for Vice President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Twenty-eight names have been put forward; to date only thirteen biographies have been received. Vice President Beasley's is one of those thirteen. Please keep her in prayer as we approach the Churchwide Assembly this August.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Pr. Karl Richard, Secretary, brought before the Synod Council a proposal to amend the Constitution, By-Laws and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA by deletion of the by-law regarding Dean of Interim Ministry:

S12.01.12. The interim pastors rostered in this synod in assembly shall elect a dean, who shall be an interim pastor under call by the Synod Council, or actively seeking placement for an interim call, serving within the territory of this synod. The term of the Dean of Interim Ministry shall be the same as specified in S12.01.12. It is understood that the Dean of Interim Ministry advises, assists, and confers with the Bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod as specified in S12.01.13 and relates to, consults with, and convenes the Interim Ministry gatherings of this synod. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the Dean of Interim Ministry, the interim pastors rostered in this synod in assembly shall elect a dean for a new three-year term.

After referencing the background information shared in his written report, Pr. Richard put forward the following:

S. C. 16.04.09 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the following resolution to place before the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly for adoption:

WHEREAS the number of trained Interim Pastors has decreased over the past decade, and

WHEREAS the way in which we are approaching the Interim process has changed, utilizing more part-time persons, including lay persons, as consultants in the process, and

WHEREAS the Synodical Staff position which oversaw personnel aspects of the Interim Pastors no longer exists, and

WHEREAS the Bishop of this Synod needs the ability to have oversight of the personnel issues related to Interim Pastors and flexibility over how to best receive the insights of Interims in the Mobility process, and

WHEREAS this may be more effectively accomplished through an appointed person as Director of Interim Ministry rather than in the current configuration of a Dean of Interim Ministry,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in Assembly amend the Constitution, By-Laws and Continuing Resolutions of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA by deletion of by-law S12.01.12.

The Synod Council unanimously approved this resolution.

Secretary Richard shared that Mr. Charlie Horn, one of our Synod's Lay Male Voting Members to the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is not able to attend. As the time before the Synod Assembly is very short, and we would like to commission our Voting Members to the Churchwide Assembly at the Synod Assembly, and we need to have those Voting Members certified by the E.L.C.A. before our next Synod Council Meeting, Secretary Richard made the following motion:

MOVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council authorize the Executive Committee of the Synod Council to find a replacement for Mr. Charlie Horn as Lay Male Voting Member to the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Synod Council unanimously approved this motion.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms Janet Neff, Synod Treasurer shared information from her report and the financial statements.

We are only two months into the new fiscal year. Giving by congregations is better than last year, but still behind what we need. Many churches have not stated an intended amount for Synod Support.

The property of the former Redeemer, East Falls has finally closed. The gross sale amount was \$450,000. As is our policy, 15% of the proceeds from the sale went to the Synod's Unrestricted Fund. From the remainder the expenses of all the properties under management were paid, and the rest was added to the Fund for Mission. The amount that went to the Fund for Mission is \$236,414.

Ms Neff reminded the Synod Council that the Fund for Mission is established in order to fund mission. This is where we get some of the resources for the Mission portion of our budget. The Welcome Church will not make money. Living Gospel Ministry will not make money. But these are important ministries for us to provide, and the Fund for Mission helps us to do this.

The Stewardship Committee is looking to increase giving by congregations, but we still need other avenues of revenue.

Our Unrestricted Funds are fine.

The Temporarily Restricted Fund looks good at the moment, but we have not yet had the expenses for Synod Assembly and Youth Event.

A question was raised regarding the Executive Committee minutes, which indicated that funds from the sale of the former Redeemer were needed to make payroll. This was a mistake. Funds from the sale of Redeemer were set in escrow because we needed to make a large real estate tax payment, not payroll. Secretary Richard will make the correction to the Executive Committee minutes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Administration Committee

A revised agenda for the upcoming Synod Assembly was placed before the Synod Council. The proposed action on the by-law was added under the Report of the Secretary. The revised agenda for the Twenty-ninth Assembly of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA was adopted.

Constitution Committee

The Constitution Committee is currently working with nine congregations. At this time they are bringing forward the constitutions of two of them for approval by the Synod Council.

S. C. 16.04.10 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the Congregational Constitution for Trinity Lutheran Church, Pleasant Valley, PA.

The Synod Council unanimously approved this resolution. Pr. Tyler Rasmussen abstained, as this involved the congregation he serves.

S. C. 16.04.11 RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the Congregational Constitution for Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Narberth, PA.

The Synod Council unanimously approved this resolution.

Nominating Committee

The written report of the Nominating Committee was reviewed. There are only two slots without any nominee: Youth Lay Female and Upper Montgomery Lay Female. The Synod Council expressed its sincere thanks to Ms Joyce Brown Adams, chairperson, and her committee for their hard work.

Forward Together in Faith Update

Mr. Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation and Communications shared two new videos for the campaign. The intent is to make an engaging presentation so that we can have Congregation Communicators and other leaders use them in the congregations of the Synod. Following the videos he asked the Synod Council for their reflections and suggestions.

The feedback on the two videos was very positive. They help explain what we are using the money for. They convey a positive message. They come across as hopeful.

Some other comments:

Pr. Jane Marston and Mr. Rod Rothermel both felt we need to put the “ask” in it. We need to be very direct in our ask for congregations to pledge now.

Mr. Phil Tackett said the message needs to be clearly “Help us help you” so people do not think we are asking the congregations to help the Synod fund its operations.

Mr. Fisher said this first year has been intentionally building the support. We now have in gifts and pledges a little more than we have spent. We are now in the Year of the Ask, so we are looking for this to be moving to the next level of support.

Ms Susan Pursch said we need to be careful in the way we say “we are helping our congregations” as many congregations are in trouble and may look for help we are not offering.

Bishop Burkat suggested perhaps we can share some stories about how we have helped some congregations, such as University Lutheran and Trinity, South Philadelphia.

Pr. Brad Burke noted we are looking to help congregational ministry, not save every congregation.

Mr. Rothermel stated we are targeting those congregations that are not closing, and that have money to make this campaign happen. We don’t need to worry at this point about those who are closing, as they are not the target audience.

Ms Pursch added that there should be something about Jesus in there!

Mr. Rothermel emphasized the place where salesmen fail is when they don’t ask for the order. We NEED THE ASK. Help us help you. PLEDGE NOW!

Investment Committee

Mr. Rod Rothermel, chairperson, shared the overall portfolio, showing each of the accounts and the amounts in them.

Oppenheimer is not an account, but a management agency, and our representative has not done anything with this account for some time. Mr. Rothermel will be sitting down with the person responsible for our funds to discuss strategy.

He then discussed the various types of accounts. He thinks the Oppenheimer disbursement needs significant revision.

The Mission Investment Fund is the lowest performer, but has benefit that it invests in the Church.

Mr. Rothermel went over his proposed portfolio guidelines from his written report:

He feels the Synod has no business being invested in individual, personally managed stocks. Unless one is able and willing to spend a lot of time monitoring them, one should not be involved in such stocks. Mutual Funds are a much better option for an organization like the Synod.

He asked if the Synod Council is in general agreement on these Guidelines, and if people have suggestions on what we do with the funds.

Pr. Tyler Rasmussen recommended that we look into the ELCA Pooled Endowment Fund.

Vice President Beasley expressed her sense that we were falling into acting as a “committee of the whole.” She recommended that the Investment Committee review various options and make proposal to the Synod Council at a future meeting.

Pr. Dwight Mason, a member of the Investment Committee, suggested the committee gather tonight to set a meeting to discuss guidelines and investment strategies, and then bring the information to the Synod Council.

The Committee will also consider whether to reinvest the Fund for Mission moneys for better return.

Audit Committee

Ms Susan Pursch, chairperson, made the report. Our auditors had a very positive response to the cooperation by the Synod office, and a positive response to Mr. Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant in particular.

Ms Pursch expressed a concern that we be clear about the Temporarily Restricted Funds, and the ways in which they may or may not be used.

MOVED that the Synod Council receive the audit for presentation to the Synod Assembly

The Synod Council unanimously approved the motion.

Comments on the management letter we received from the Auditors:

Bishop Burkat noted that the letter indicates we are down \$415,000 which we are not.

Ms Janet Neff said this number negates the amount we received from sale of a congregational property. While it is true that omitting this from Income is an approved Accounting practice, it is also true that a large part of our deficit is because of the maintenance costs related to these closed congregations.

The Audit Committee submitted a signed recommendation which generated significant discussion. A copy of this recommendation is attached.

Bishop Burkat relayed responses to each part of the recommendation from Vice President Beasley and herself. Her main concerns were 1. the negative tone which gave the impression that we as a Synod are on the verge of closing, and 2. the impression that we are making our budget by closing congregations. Bishop Burkat pointed out that the Synod is not on the verge of closing. Further, we do not close churches to sell them and fill our budget gap. In reality, we don't close churches, they close themselves. We then receive the buildings, but need to maintain them until they sell. When they sell, we apply 15% of the sale to the operation of the Synod. The remaining 85%, after expenses, goes to the Fund for Mission.

Discussion ensued about the concern of the Audit Committee that more attention and priority needs to be given by the Finance Committee, Stewardship Committee and the Office of the Bishop regarding either raising money or cutting expenses to keep a realistic and balanced budget.

Stewardship Committee

Pr. Patricia Davenport shared some of the thoughts and guiding principles of the Committee:

We need to change our language from speaking of scarcity to celebrating abundance.

We need to be about creating a culture of Spiritual Generosity.

There will be a resource table at the Synod Assembly.

Congregations give in response to Acts of Thanksgiving.

Workshops are being held in the Northeast Philadelphia and Chester Conferences.

A new initiative called "Rekindle" is being introduced, and is designed especially for African Descent congregations.

The Committee met to rekindle themselves for the work of encouraging generosity.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

None

The meeting adjourned at 7:13 PM with prayer by Pr. Dwight Mason

The 140th meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be June 9, 2016, at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 4:00 PM

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

approved by Synod Council June 9, 2016

**RECOMMENDATION FROM THE SYNOD AUDIT COMMITTEE
TO THE SYNOD COUNCIL**

The Synod Audit Committee has reviewed the 2015 draft audit.

It is clear that the synod cannot continue to function, as we have known it, unless we work together to find a way to reverse the continued decline in synod revenue.

We cannot continue to depend on the sale of closed churches in order to balance the budget.

Our deficit spending cannot be maintained without the Synod going out of business.

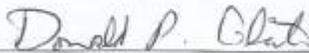
We must find a way to reach out to congregations, pastors and individual members of the synod with a message that will bring us the resources we need.

Therefore we are recommending that the Synod Finance Committee work together with the Synod Stewardship Committee and come up with a plan to either increase synod revenue or decrease spending.

And

That the plan be presented to the Synod Council at its June 9, 2016 meeting.

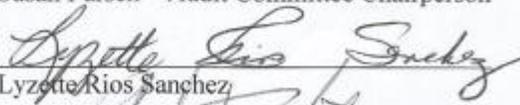
Signed: Members of the Synod Audit Committee present at the April 14, 2016 meeting



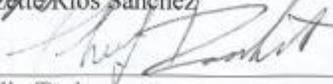
Donald Gleiter



Susan Pursch – Audit Committee Chairperson



Lyzette Rios Sanchez



Philip Tackett