

MINUTES
of the 141st MEETING
of the SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD COUNCIL
of the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA
September 22, 2016
St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Perkasie, PA

The Reverend Dr. Phil Krey, pastor of St. Andrew, gave words of welcome and greeting to the Synod Council. He shared that enthusiasm is high at St. Andrew. Attendance is growing, new and reactivated people are becoming involved and commitment to ministry is strong. The use of affinity groups for new members is helping integrate these new people into the life of the congregation.

The Reverend Serena Sellers, Dean of Upper Bucks Conference, led the Council in devotions that were based on Upper Bucks Conference's identity as "the Koinonia Conference."

There are 25 congregations in the Conference. One third (8) predate the U. S. Constitution. The youngest congregation in the Conference is celebrating 110 years of ministry this year. One third of the congregations are in pastoral transition. One third are less than fulltime ministry. As a Conference they are doing much together as rostered leaders, as lay leaders, and as congregations. Cooperative efforts and ministries are common, as congregations share administrative staff, confirmation and youth programs, and hold education events for adults. There is also a great deal of cooperation as clusters of congregations work on efforts to feed and care for residents of the area.

Vice President Tracey A. Beasley called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Synod Council approved the minutes of the 140th meeting of the Synod Council as presented.

SETTING THE AGENDA

Vice President Beasley put forward the following revisions to the previously published agenda: The Constitution Committee will come under new business. The Vice President's Report will move down to Committee appointments. The report of the Compensation Committee will be placed where the Vice President's report was to be.

The agenda was adopted as adapted.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Churchwide Assembly

Bishop Burkat highlighted that our representation at the Churchwide Assembly was 50% persons of color and/or whose primary language is other than English. We are becoming a model for the ELCA with our commitment to diversity.

Vice President Beasley was a nominee for Vice President of the ELCA. She did very well in presenting herself, and earned respect and praise by many at the Churchwide Assembly.

Bishop Burkat expressed congratulations to William B. Horne, II who was elected to the position of Vice President of the ELCA.

Other comments from CWA participants: Pleasant surprise that so many of the SEPA delegation “hung out” with each other. There were many young people; great fellowship; and no drama!

Closing of St. Michael

This was a sad day as such a longstanding congregation came to the end of its ministry. We as a Synod paid to have the sanctuary cleaned. The people of St. Michael were not initially sure if this was worth it, as they have not worshipped in the sanctuary for years, but it was a wonderful sight to have it cleaned for this occasion, and it was important to do this. It was a vibrant closing service; very poignant, but a wonderful celebration.

Consideration is being given to how we might be able to re-purpose this space for ministry in Germantown; perhaps not word and sacrament, but some form of ministry.

Dr. Phil Krey stated that the government is downloading social services on local congregations. Many sites are becoming social service centers, but he called us to remember we are first and foremost a center for worship. When we focus on service, we miss our purpose and many people walk away, leaving only a small core as the actual congregation. It is hard to continue ministry in this way.

United Lutheran Seminary

The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg have come together on a new name and processes for moving forward. The new name, United Lutheran Seminary, is intentionally not tied to a place like Philadelphia, Gettysburg, or even Pennsylvania because we do not know in what ways the Seminary will be “non-geographical” in the future.

SEKOMU

On September 1, 2016 the Sebastian Kolowa Memorial University, an institution of Higher Education operated by our companion Synod, the North Eastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, was attacked by several men armed with automatic weapons and grenades. We of the SEPA Synod have been supporters of this ministry since its inception, and have helped to build and financially support this University.

Bishop Burkat wrote a letter to Bishop Munga and his wife Dr. Anneth Munga that was read to the congregations of the Diocese. She expressed our grief and concern for the people of the School, the Diocese and Tanzania, and shared that our prayers are rising on their behalf. Bishop Burkat told the Mungas that she would not share the news until they in Tanzania had the chance to talk to their people and bring the news forward themselves. It is their story to tell, not ours.

The Reverend Brad Burke, Assistant to the Bishop, was in Tanzania at the time of the incident. He shared these details: “eight armed men, all Tanzanians, made the attack. This is very unusual, as Tanzania has a history and reputation for being a very peaceful society.

We (the SEPA Synod contingent of six people) never felt we were in danger, but it was very disconcerting as the events unfolded and as we determined how we could best be of help. We decided to hold off our sharing because we knew the details of the attack were still being determined.”

We want to have an appeal to help. Other international Lutheran Church partners from Germany, Sweden and Finland have also been asked to help. A proposed flyer about the need to help will go out tomorrow if the Synod Council approves the concept.

By consensus the Synod Council expressed its support of this effort.

Further comments about the attack:

Ms Susan Pursch – I was saddened that we did not share the need for prayer more quickly. I recognize the need for care regarding details, but I wish we had received a generic request to be in prayer for Tanzania and the University.

Bishop Burkat – I did send prayers on our behalf, but was leery about sending a request which might raise concerns and questions that were not yet able to be answered.

Pastor Burke – I appreciate your sentiments, and we are to be partners in prayer; yet in the midst of the circumstances, I feel it was important to be more discreet and less revealing in our conversation. I feel we were appropriate in how we handled this situation.

Bishop Burkat – my protocol is to have a conference call with the Executive committee, which encouraged Pr. Burke to immediately have a conference call with the committee so that it could be known prior to the Synod Council meeting.

Adam Clark – When I heard Ms Pursch’s comment I thought of the persistence of the unjust judge. If we could have prayed more, maybe something more could have been done.

Bishop Burkat – When Pr. Burke and five other people of SEPA Synod are present, it counts. When I sent a letter within hours, it counts, and it represents all of us.

Pastor Tom Lang – I want to affirm what Pr. Burke and the Bishop have said. Safety needs to be first. The people in Tanzania knew of our prayers.

Bishop Burkat then prayed for Tanzania, Charlotte, NC (the site of another death of a black man by police), our nation and all victims of violence.

Actions on the roster

The following actions on the roster were presented, all of which were **unanimously adopted by the Synod Council.**

Ecumenical Call:

S.C. 16.09.01 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend an Ecumenical Call to the Rev. Ashley B. Rossi as Associate Pastor at Carmel Presbyterian Church of Glenside, PA, effective September 22, 2016.

Non-stipendiary Call:

S.C. 16.09.02 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council extend a one-year non-stipendiary call to Dr. Anita Baly as pastor at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Plymouth Meeting, PA beginning August 14, 2016 to August 13, 2017.

Renewal of Specialized Call:

S.C. 16.09.03 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve a one-year renewable call to the Rev. Linda Manson as Mission Developer at Living Gospel Ministries effective November 1, 2016 and ending October 31, 2017.

Calls to Interim Ministry:

S.C. 16.09.04 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Janet Peterman to interim ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fairview Village beginning August 22, 2016, and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Peterman resigns this call, whichever comes first.

S.C. 16.09.05 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Dr. Susan Kay Folks to interim ministry at Advent Lutheran Church in Harleysville, PA starting July 5, 2016 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Folks resigns this call, whichever comes first.

S.C. 16.09.06 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council call the Rev. Wayne R. Shelor to interim ministry at New Hanover Lutheran Church in Gilbertsville, PA starting August 4, 2016 and extending until a pastor is called by the congregation or until Pastor Shelor resigns this call, whichever comes first.

On Leave from Call Requests:

S.C. 16.09.07 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Thomas Lang on leave from call status, 1st year, effective May 23, 2016

S.C. 16.09.08 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Andrena Ingram on leave from call status, 1st year, medical disability, effective June 17, 2016

S.C. 16.09.09 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Karl Krueger on leave from call status, 1st year, effective July 1, 2016

Retirement Requests:

S.C. 16.09.10 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend David Mueller retirement status effective July 18, 2016

S.C. 16.09.11 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council grants the Reverend Asha George-Guiser retirement status effective September 1, 2016

Information Not Requiring Action:

Transfer:

Pastor Ashley Rossi from Upper Susquehanna Synod effective August 1, 2016

Deaths:

The Rev. John Louis Kinzel, retired pastor, died August 7, 2016

REPORT OF THE COMPENSATION COMMITTEE

Vice President Beasley called on the Reverend Paul Jann, chairperson of the Compensation Committee, to present the Committee's report

Pastor Jann shared the following information as background to the suggested guidelines which had been distributed to the Synod Council.

It has been several years since we have had a formal review of our compensation guidelines. Over these years there has been adjustment to the guidelines, but there has not been an intentional review of the numbers for our area with regard to a fair salary and accurate estimation of housing costs.

The Committee looked at other Synods, and realized that we are, on the whole, paying less than they are. As a result, we are having a difficult time attracting and keeping clergy. The Committee considered what might make sense as a number for salary. At McDonald's you earn \$8 per hour. The Committee felt \$20 per hour would be sensible for a salary rate. The Committee also felt that \$18,000 would be a fair average of housing costs across our Synod. \$20 per hour for a 40 hour week, plus \$18,000 for housing, and ½ the social security for this amount would make a total Defined Compensation of \$64,160.

The Committee also recommends the Gold plan for health coverage, 12% for pension contributions, the congregation should cover the costs of Synod Assembly, Bishop's Convocation, and provide funds for Continuing Education, and provide 4 weeks of vacation, including 4 Sundays.

Pr. Jann stated we need a standard so that congregations realize what is fair for the work they are expecting. It is not fair or right to expect pastors to simply take a cut in pay when congregations are experiencing fiscal strain. In such a situation there may be a need to discuss other options, such as going part-time, but that needs to be a fair conversation between the parties. This document is intended to be a guide for these conversations.

Several members of the Council felt this number was too high, and their congregations could never afford this new package.

Several questions were raised about the housing number, and asked if there was an awareness of how low this number is for several areas of the Synod.

A suggestion was made that perhaps more vacation time might be an offer made in light of lower compensation.

Pr. Jann stated that this is a guideline, and that all these issues would need to be a part of the negotiation process for the candidate.

Several members asked what the purpose of this document is; how and for whom is this document to be used?

Pr. Jann stated this is a document particularly for initial calls. Issues related to long serving pastors, those with advanced degrees, added responsibilities such as head of staff, etc. still need to be addressed by the committee.

The Committee recommends that these guidelines be adjusted annually to reflect the rate of inflation.

Recommendations regarding Clergy Compensation Guidelines:

This does not need Assembly approval.

The Committee should clarify what this particular document is for – if for First Call, as Pastor Jann indicated, make that clear in the header and be consistent throughout the document. For instance, concerns about housing costs varying in different areas of the Synod should be clarified on page two, but other issues such as advanced degrees, amount of responsibility, and length of time in service in the ministry may need to be removed from this First Call document, and included in a separate guideline for second or subsequent calls.

A suggestion had also been offered to consider whether extra time off may be a benefit offered if compensation is lower than what is recommended for a full-time position.

Vice President Beasley called the discussion to an end to move the agenda forward, and indicated that there would be further discussion at the next Synod Council meeting if needed.

MISSION MOMENT

Ellen Daneke, chairperson of the Forward Together in Faith Campaign, presented an update on the Campaign. She reminded the Council that the “silent phase” of the program began in 2014, and the celebration of the conclusion of the Campaign is anticipated in 2019.

The goal of the Campaign is \$2.5 million.

We currently have commitments from 35 of 55 leaders of our Synod. We are working to get that to 100%.

Currently we have received gifts and pledges in the amount of \$361,000.

The start-up costs have been \$214,000. This includes the cost for Kairos Associates, Church Assessment Tool surveys, and administrative costs.

We still need \$1.9 million to meet our goal, but we feel we can do this.

The number of congregations pledging so far is 20 of 154, including 3 of 26 Synod Council congregations.

We will have Ambassadors going out in the next 90 days. Since the Synod Assembly we have had several congregations request Ambassadors to assist them in the process of explaining the Campaign to their congregations.

Be an advocate for the campaign! Tell the story, make the ask!

Secretary's Report

Secretary Richard shared from his report, which was distributed to the Synod Council.

Open positions on Synod council

We currently have two open positions on the Synod Council. The Nominating Committee has been asked to assist with the search for candidates to fill these positions. We will bring these names to the Synod Council for approval when persons have been identified.

Resolution regarding the closing of St. Michael's, Germantown

When we have a closing of a congregation, we adopt the following resolution so that the Office of the Bishop has formal authority to divest the property as appropriate.

S.C. 16.09.12 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council acknowledges with sadness the action of St. Michael Lutheran Church, Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, to close, effective September 11, 2016, on which date the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod received the property of St. Michael, Philadelphia, 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, September 22, 2016, 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 unanimously adopted the resolution.

Revisions to the Synod Constitution

At the Churchwide Assembly in August there were significant revisions to the Constitution, By-laws and Continuing Resolutions for the Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The revisions which apply to required provisions take effect by action of the Churchwide Assembly, and do not need ratification by this Council nor our Synod Assembly. These revisions are being incorporated into our Constitution and will be posted when completed.

There are some revisions which are not in required provisions, and will need consideration by the Synod Assembly for ratification. We will also review our entire Synod Constitution as there are other provisions which need amendment or revision. We will be entering a process to review these options and bring recommendations to this Council for consideration prior to sending them to the Assembly.

Congregational Constitutions

There have also been changes to the Model Constitution for Congregations which were approved at the Churchwide Assembly. It is important for all of our congregations to update our constitutions to reflect the legal, structural and theological language adopted at the CWA.

This is an especially good time to enter into this important process, especially for those congregations that have not updated their constitution for some period of time.

Treasurer's Report

Ms Sue Massey, chairperson of the Finance Committee made this report.

Partnership support is \$47,000 behind budget, but we are not overly worried about this; it is comparable to previous years.

The Finance Committee will be meeting with the Stewardship Committee in the near future regarding receipts.

The Reverend Larry Smoose and the Stewardship team will be making follow-up contacts, particularly with congregations that have not made any commitments/gifts to the Synod.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Beasley reflected on her experience at the Churchwide Assembly in August. She said, "I've been a few times. This was the most spiritual group I ever went with. The best group I ever attended with. We had strong support for each other.

It was a wonderful experience to be a candidate. The support and help I received from Bishop Burkat and Susan Pursch was tremendous.

On the last Friday a representative from the "Always Being Made New" Campaign for the ELCA came up to thank me for how I represented the Synod, and the way our Synod has given."

Vice President Beasley then referred the Synod Council to the Executive Committee Report.

Committee Appointments

As there had been discussion about terms of service on these Committees at the previous Synod Council meeting, it was determined that membership on a Synod Council Committee will not end with the Synod Assembly, unless a member of the Synod Council has either completed his/her term, or is not re-elected by the Assembly to the Synod Council. The members of the Committees will continue to serve on their respective Committees until the reassignment process is completed. If the chairperson of a Committee is not re-elected the Bishop and Vice president will appoint a new chairperson as soon as possible so that the Committee can continue to function.

Vice President Beasley then reviewed the list of the Synod Council Committees and the assignments as proposed.

S.C. 16.09.13 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council confirms the appointments to the Synod Committees for 2016-2017 as recommended by the Bishop and Vice President.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

The Reverend Jane Marston, chairperson of the Constitution Committee, brought forward the recommendation that the Synod Council approve the Constitution of Trinity, South Philadelphia.

S.C. 16.09.14 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council approve the Congregational Constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Trinity, South Philadelphia.

The Synod Council unanimously adopted this resolution.

The meeting adjourned at 6:44 pm with prayer by the Reverend Dr. Philip D. Krey

The 142nd meeting of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Council will be December 8, 2016, 4:00 PM

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

Approved by Synod Council December 8, 2016