

Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Mission Profile

January 2018

in preparation for election of a new synod bishop May 2018

Process of developing this profile

In the summer of 2017, the synod council of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod appointed a group of active lay and rostered leaders to develop a profile that focused on the mission of the synod to help prepare for the election of a synod bishop in May 2018. The team met several times, identifying information that was needed and coming up with ways to obtain that information. We used our individual and synod resources, MissionInsite, and the ELCA Office of Research and Evaluation in sending out and interpreting information from a questionnaire. That brief questionnaire was distributed in November. It asked respondents about their congregations' successes and struggles, what skills and gifts the next bishop will need, and what role will be most important for the new bishop to fulfill. The questionnaire was made available through social media, websites, PDFs and direct email invitation. This profile contains information from the questionnaire and from other sources.

We have also prepared a power point presentation that presents much of this information in graphs, pie charts, etc. This will be easy to share in conference meetings, congregational council meetings, etc. Supporting documents, including all MissionInsite reports, the synod trend report, actual questionnaire responses, and synod bishop church-wide and regional responsibilities, will be made available on request.

Bishop Election Process Transition Team members: co-chairs, Ms. Julie Kinzel and Ms. Patricia Robinson; Dr. Addie Butler, Pastor Lynette Chapman, Pastor Jim Goodyear, Pastor Paul Neff, Mr. Doug Parry, Ms. Karen Paulus, Pastor Donna Wright.

Brief Summary Statement

The next bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod should focus on being a “caster of vision” and relationship builder. Additionally, the new bishop should have wisdom, vision, knowledge, and patience, be a pastor to pastors and be a consensus builder. For the synod to show “love of neighbor,” it should make efforts toward “anti-racism,” focus on issues around hunger and homelessness, and economic justice. Success in the synod in three years' time would manifest as congregations growing in average worship attendance, becoming more diverse, and working for social justice. Finally, for the synod to be a cohesive Christian community is important as well.

Top Joys Identified by Respondents/Congregations - Questionnaire results

1. What is the best joy or ministry in your congregation?

- 31 percent of comments were about outreach
- 16 percent of comments were about worship
- 12 percent of comments were about music

Top Joys Identified by Respondents/Synod – Questionnaire results

- 27 percent of comments were about synod wide events or programs
- 14 percent were “I don’t know”
- 14 percent were about the inclusive nature of the synod
- 13 percent were in praise of synod staff

Demographic Information

The Synod is composed of 5 counties in the southeastern corner of Pennsylvania: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod (7F) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America covers 2,154 square miles. Southeastern Pennsylvania reported a total of 69,180 baptized members in 2016, which is 32 members per square mile. (*source, ELCA ORE*)

There were 154 congregations according to the 2015 parochial report. 151 congregations were organized and three (3) were under development.

Of those, in 2015, (using the language of the Church-wide Organization):

- 44 were small – 1-50 average attendance - 28%
- 81 were pastoral – 51-150 average attendance -52%
- 27 were program – 151-350 average attendance - 18%
- 2 were corporate – 351-800 average attendance - 1%
- 2 were mission (in addition to the above) - 1%

In terms of average worship attendance:

- 17 were stable – change between -3% and +3%, from 2009 to 2014
 - 16 were growing – attendance grew by more than 3%, from 2009 to 2014
 - 115 were declining – decline in attendance of more than 3%, from 2009 to 2014
 - 2 were mission congregations
 - 4 were “specialty” congregations (disabled, deaf, Korean, Oromo)
- (*source Synod’s Parochial Report, 12/31/2015*)

As of 2017, there are 151 Lutheran churches on the territory of the Synod. (*source SEPA staff*)

Of the 151 congregations that are currently part of the SEPA Synod:

- 91 have fulltime settled pastors
- 15 have more than one pastor serving the congregation
- 28 have part-time settled pastors
- 14 have interim/bridge pastors
- 3 are in transition/have neither interim, nor bridge, nor settled pastors

(*source SE PA staff*)

Of the 172 pastors (not retired) who are on the roster of the ELCA and affiliated with the SE PA Synod:

- 34 are below the age of 40 years
- 105 are between the ages of 40 and 64
- 33 are over the age of 65 years

(*source SE PA staff*)

Of the 276 pastors who are on the roster of the ELCA and affiliated with the SE PA Synod:

- 47 are below the age of 45 years
- 50 are between the ages of 45 and 59
- 65 are between the ages of 60 and 69
- 114 are between the ages of 70-92

The large number of pastors in the 60-69 cohort will likely mean many retirements in the first term of the new bishop.

(source SE PA staff)

Rostered Leaders in SEPA Synod include:

active pastors 156	On leave from call/medical disability pastors 15
retired pastors 124	
active deacons 12	On leave from call/medical disability deacons 2
retired deacons 17	

(source SE PA staff)

In 2017, the population in the five (5) county area was 4,119,041, with:

- 2,599,606 (63.11%) White
- 894,970 (21.7%) Black
- 312,553 (7.5%) Hispanic/Latino
- 227,682 (5.5%) Asian
- 84,230 (2.0%) other

In the next 10 years, population is projected to grow moderately, by 2.7-2.8%.

(source QuickInSite Report, MissionInsite)

In 2012 (the most recent data available), there were 54,575 members in the SE PA Synod. They were:

- 50,365 (92%) White
- 1,966 (4%) African American/Black
- 451 (.8%) African National/African Caribbean
- 29 (<.1%) American Indian/Alaska Native
- 107 (.2%) Arab Middle Eastern
- 543 (1%) Asian Pacific Islander
- 438 (.8%) Latino American
- 272 (.5%) other
- 404 (.7%) Multiracial

(source Synod's Parochial Report, 12/31/2015)

(Source of the following data is the InSite Reports, MissionInsite, and ELCA ORE)

The diversity of a community is shaped (not only) by the racial/ethnicity of the people who reside in it but also people's age, income and education. Society is aging. People are living longer and there are fewer live births. The residents of the SE PA Synod territory are no exception. The average age of head of households in Synod congregations has been rising for several years. It is projected to continue to rise over the next five years. The average age in 2017 is 50 years of age. It may be that the members of the Lutheran congregations in the Synod are

aging as children are raised and leave the area but the parents remain. Philadelphia, a large part of our synod, has a poverty rate of 25%, making it the poorest of the 10 largest cities in the U.S.

In 2016, congregations in the synod averaged 461 baptized members per congregation; in 2010 the average number of baptized members per congregation was 538. In 2016, the synod baptized 689 children, 97 adults, and affirmed the faith of 582 adults. As a point of comparison, congregations reported losing 759 baptized members to death and 4,788 overall in 2016. In Southeastern Pennsylvania the gap between members received due to baptisms and baptized members lost to death has narrowed considerably in the past few years.

In 2016, the aggregate worship attendance on a typical Sunday was 15,001 (about 22 percent of baptized membership) with an average attendance per congregation of 100. The ELCA had an average worship attendance of 101 per congregation (approximately 26 percent of baptized members). In 2016, 31 percent of congregations had an average worship attendance of 126 or more. These congregations accounted for 59 percent of the synod's average worship attendance overall. We see 23 percent of congregations with an average worship attendance between 26 and 50; these congregations account for nine percent of the synod's overall worship attendance. In 2006, 37 percent of congregations in the synod accounted for 68 percent of the overall worship attendance.

Congregations with between 26 and 50 in average worship attendance comprised 10% of congregations but only 3% of average worship attendance.

At the end of 2016, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod had 150 organized congregations; at the end of 2010, the synod reported 158 organized congregations, and in 2005, the synod had 172 congregations. At the end of 2000, there were 178 congregations in the synod. Overall, the number of congregations has declined 16% since 2000.

Giving and Stewardship

Undesignated and designated (total) giving was \$35.7 million by members of congregations in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod in 2016. This averaged out to \$2,383 per attendee. In 2010, total giving amounted to \$37.8 million or \$1,881 per attendee. The 2016 total giving amount adjusted for 2010 dollars would be \$32.4 million. Of that amount, congregations shared 6.1% with the synod.

Operating expenses for congregations in the synod in 2010 were \$38.1 million, or 74 percent of total disbursements. In 2016, operating expenses were \$36.8 million, accounting for 80 percent of total disbursements.

Per member giving to the synod averaged \$122 in 2016, a fairly high amount compared to other synods. Despite a higher rate of giving per attendee, the synod has not been able to offset the financial losses resulting from lower attendance rates.

Finances

The synod income for the year ending January 31, 2017 was \$2,722,744.

Expenses were \$2,248,878.

Mission support sent to ELCA was \$925,565. This represents 50% of the unrestricted partnership support sent in by congregations.

Net assets of the synod are \$1,903,049.

The current synod budget can be made available.

Forward Together in Faith is a multi-year campaign to raise funds to transform the culture of our Synod: equipping congregational leaders, forming new networks, seeding innovative ways of being Church, and communicating God's story for the 21st Century. Through Feb. 5, 2018, the capital campaign has received income of \$547,606 with pledges outstanding of \$162,448. There were also expenses totaling \$235,495. Grant distributions were \$44,395.

Synod Office is presently housed on the campus of the United Lutheran Seminary/Philadelphia. That lease ends December 31, 2019.

Partners in Ministry and Mission

The SEPA synod has longstanding social ministry relationships with organizations. These partner organizations are affiliated with the synod and with Lutheran Services in America, the largest social services network in the US. LSA is a multi-faceted organization whose members serve more than 6 million persons each year — one out of every 50 people in the U.S. and Caribbean. <https://ministrylink.org/?s=social+ministry+organizations> retrieved 12/19/2017

Artman Lutheran Home
Bethesda House Corporation (Lutheran Knolls)
Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries
Good Shepherd Penn Partners
Kencrest Centers
Liberty Lutheran Services
Liberty At Home
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (with the other PA synods)
Lutheran Settlement House
Manatawny Manor
The Hearth at Drexel
Paul's Run Retirement Community
Silver Springs – Martin Luther School

A separate document (see appendices) details the responsibilities of the SEPA Synod bishop in relationship to church-wide service, Lutheran educational institutions (United Lutheran Seminary and Muhlenberg College), and ecumenical and interfaith partnerships.

Synod Staffing Structure

Currently, the Synod is served by a dedicated staff of clergy and lay professionals who support our congregations and leaders, and facilitate a range of programs for the Synod. There are eleven (11) – fulltime and part-time – members of the Bishops direct staff, supplemented by eight (8) deans: one for each of the eight (8) conferences in the Synod. (*source SEPA website*)

Full Time/Part Time/Non-Compensatory
FT The Rev. Claire Schenot Burkat, Bishop

FT Yvonne Curtis, Director of Operations and Executive Assistant to the Bishop
 PT The Rev. Rachel Anderson, Campaign Coordinator, Forward Together in Faith Campaign
 FT Martin Schwab, Senior Accountant
 PT Courtney Smith, Interim Coordinator for Evangelical Outreach and Youth, Young Adult and Spiritual Formation
 FT The Rev. Patricia Davenport, Director for Evangelical Mission
 FT Robert Fisher, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission Interpretation and Communications
 FT Cynta Outterbridge, Communications Assistant and Database Manager
 PT The Rev. Susan Lang, Events Planner
 FT Bill Harp, Coordinator for Vocations and Leadership
 FT The Rev. Bradley Burke, Assistant to the Bishop for Youth, Young Adult and Spiritual Formation
 NC The Rev. Leslie Richard, Spiritual Director to the Synod

Deans of the 8 Conferences, plus other folks involved in mobility and candidacy, receive a stipend for their service to the synod.

The Rev. Carlton Rodgers – Dean of Central Philadelphia Conference
 The Rev. Jane Marston – Dean of NE/nW Philadelphia Conference
 The Rev. Ronald Wesemann – Dean of Chester Conference
 The Rev. Leslie Richard - Dean of Delaware Conference
 The Rev. Carolann Hopcke - Dean of Upper Bucks Conference
 The Rev. Dr. Paul Sorcek – Dean of Lower Bucks Conference
 The Rev. Rebecca Schanely - Dean of Upper Montgomery Conference
 The Rev. Julie DeWerth - Dean of Lower Montgomery Conference
 Deacon Allison Wilcox, Director of Candidacy
 Fred Renigar, Chair of Candidacy Committee
 The Rev. Marcia Bell, Director for Mobility
 The Rev. Christian McMullan, Director of Interim Ministry

According to the Synod constitution, the SEPA Synod shall have:

An Executive Committee
 A Consultation Committee
 A Committee on Discipline
 A Mutual Ministry Committee
 An Audit Committee

and such other committees as the Synod may from time to time determine. According to the current bylaws, these additional committees are:

A Committee on Ministry
 A Committee on Youth Ministry
 A Global Missions Committee
 A Finance Committee
 An Investment Committee

(Source: SEPA Constitution, Chapter 11, pages 30-35: accessed from the SEPA.org website)

In addition, there are over 40 teams made up of rostered leaders and lay people that do substantial ministry on behalf of the synod. That list is included in the appendices.

Trends

While most congregations are still doing vibrant ministry, numbers (membership, average worship attendance, and financial giving) tend to be declining. While this trend has major impacts for each congregation and the rostered leaders who serve them, it also impacts the synod's ministry. There are far fewer synod staff than there were even 8 years ago. There is some appreciation for how well the synod is doing with fewer resources than in the past, but also some dissatisfaction that synod is not providing as many services as rostered leaders and lay people want. Regarding the loss of membership in congregations, some can be traced to a higher number of people without any faith affiliation in our society, some to more accurate statistical reporting. Increasing societal conflicts with Sunday morning scheduling is another factor.

Most of the people of this synod celebrate our diversity, while acknowledging there is much more work to do in our own anti-racism and other justice efforts. We are mindful of the different treatment afforded congregations that are small and/or majority people of color and/or in low income areas. Most of the differential can be traced to systemic racism; most people in the synod long to do better and are aware of the challenges. The Synod's Anti-Racism Team (ART) is available to help congregations understand racism as it exists in individuals, institutions, and societal structures, including our churches, and how to become allies with persons who live with this sin on a daily basis. Additional information from our Anti-Racism Team can be found at www.ministrylink.org While our synod is a Reconciled in Christ synod, both the synod and its congregations could do better in welcoming the gifts of LGBT+ individuals.

SEPA Synod has taken institutional steps to ensure that youth and young adults are welcome in the ministry of the church. These steps include subsidizing the cost of youth/young adult voting members at assembly and having a synod staff person with youth/young adult ministry as a major part of his responsibilities.

The Bishop's Gifts for Ministry

In the questionnaire sent to individuals in the synod, we asked "What skills/gifts will be needed in our next bishop?" Here is a summary of the top responses:

- 35 percent of comments were about the next bishop having "wisdom, vision, knowledge, and patience"
- 14 percent of comments were about the bishop being "a pastor to pastors"
- Ten percent of comments were about the next bishop being "a consensus builder"

Concerns Important to Synod Respondents of Questionnaire

- strong feeling of wanting congregations to thrive, with synod help in networking, growing pastoral leadership (including during interim times and with preaching), and figuring out how to deal with change.
- high value for social justice concerns, especially efforts to deal with racism (minority view that the synod already does too much of this); also strong concerns for ministry in the city (minority view that the city congregations get preference), LGBT+ persons both rostered and lay.
- both congregations and rostered leaders want the next bishop to know and value them.
- while a significant number highly value the ecumenical and interfaith work the current bishop has done, many respondents would prefer the next synod bishop to spend less time on such

matters and more time with rostered leaders and congregations. This view is more prevalent among rostered leaders than lay people.

- many concerns were expressed about intentional interim ministry, with most valuing this ministry, wanting synod leadership to “help congregations in finding the best pastor”; minority expressed negative feelings about certain interim experiences.
- many respondents expressed the need for particular spiritual gifts in the next bishop, as well as the ability to balance competing interests.
- appreciation for and desire for continued youth involvement.

References

The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Ollikainen
Pastorollikainen@gmail.com
[215.859.3779](tel:215.859.3779)

Patricia Robinson
pmrdst@aol.com
215-576-1519

The Rev. Paul Lutz
Plutz@trinitylansdale.com
[215.368.1710](tel:215.368.1710)

The Rev. Tracie Bartholomew
Tbartholomew@njsynod.org
[609.586.6800](tel:609.586.6800)